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THE WORKS OF
BOOTH TARKINGTON

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No. 368

After original sketch by Booth Tarkington

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"My Lord Tom Townbroke, it is he who hands her through the set"

From a drawing by Booth Tarkington

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THE WORKS OF

BOOTH TARKINGTON

—

HARLEQUIN AND COLUMBINE
AND OTHER STORIES

VOLUME
VIII

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
MCMXXII

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HARLEQUIN AND COLUMBINE

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CHAPTER I

FOR a lucky glimpse of the great Talbot Potter, the girls who caught it may thank that conjunction of Olympian events which brings within the boundaries of one November week the Horse Show and the roaring climax of the football months and the more dulcet, yet vast, beginning of the opera season. Some throbbing of attendant multitudes coming to the ears of Talbot Potter, he obeyed an inward call to walk to rehearsal by way of Fifth Avenue, and turning out of Forty-fourth Street to become part of the people-sea of the southward current, felt the eyes of the northward beating upon his face like the pulsing successions of an exhilarating surf. His Fifth Avenue knew its Talbot Potter.

Strangers used to leisurely appraisals upon their own thoroughfares are apt to believe that Fifth Avenue notices nothing; but they are mistaken; it is New York which is preoccupied, not Fifth Avenue. The Fifth Avenue eye, like a policeman's, familiar

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with a variety of types, catalogues you and replaces you upon the shelf with such automatic rapidity that you are not aware you have been taken down. Fifth Avenue is secretly populous with observers who take note of everything.

Of course, among these peregrinate great numbers almost in a stupour so far as what is closest around them is concerned: and there are those, too, who are so completely busied with either the consciousness of being noticed, or the hope of being noticed, or the hatred of it, that they take note of nothing else. Fifth Avenue expressions are a filling meal for the prowling lonely joker; but what will most satisfy his cannibal appetite is the passage of the self-conscious men and women. For here, on a good day, he cannot fail to relish some extreme cases of their whimsical disease: fledgling young men making believe to be haughty, to cover their dreadful symptoms, the mask itself thus revealing what it seeks to conceal; timid young ladies likewise treacherously exposed by their defences; and very different ladies, but in similar case, being retouched ladies, tinted ladies; and ladies who know that they are pretty at first sight, ladies who chat with some obscured companion only to offer the public a treat of grace-

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ful gestures; and poor ladies making believe to be rich ladies; and rich ladies making believe to be important ladies; and many other sorts of conscious ladies. And men—ah, pitiful!—pitiful the wretch whose hardihood had involved him in cruel and unusual great gloss and unsheltered tailed coat. Any man in his overcoat is wrapped in his castle: he fears nothing. But to this hunted creature, naked in his robin's tail, the whole panorama of the Avenue is merely a blurred audience, focussing upon him a vast glare of derision: he walks swiftly, as upon fire, pretends to careless side-long interest in shop-windows as he goes, makes play with his unfamiliar cane only to be horror-stricken at the flourishings so evoked of his wild gloves; and at last, fairly crawling with the eyes he feels all over him, he must draw forth his handkerchief and shelter behind it in the dishonourable affectation of a sneeze. Ah, poor man! Poor man!

Piquant contrast to these obsessions, the well-known expression of Talbot Potter lifted him above the crowd to such high serenity his face might have been that of a young Pope borne along in his chair—an incredibly handsome young Pope, with a dash of Sidney Carton. His glance fixed itself, in its

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benign detachment, upon the misty top of the Flat-iron, far down the street, and the more frequent the plainly visible recognitions among the north-bound people, the less he seemed aware of them. And yet, whenever the sieving current of pedestrians brought momentarily face to face with him a girl or woman, apparently civilized and in the mode, who obviously had never seen him before and seemed not to care if it should be her fate never to repeat the experience, Talbot Potter had a certain desire. If society had established a rule that all men must instantly obey and act upon every fleeting impulse, Talbot Potter would have taken that girl or woman by the shoulders and said to her:

"*What's the matter with you!*"

At Forty-second Street he crossed over, proceeded to the middle of the block, and halted dreamily on the edge of the pavement, his back to the crowd. His face was toward the Library, with its two proud pet lions, typifying learning, and he appeared to study the great building. One or two of the passersby had seen him standing on that self-same spot before; in fact, he always stopped there whenever he walked down the Avenue.

For a little time (not too long) he stood there; and

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thus absorbed he was, as they say, a Picture. Moreover, being such a popular one, he attracted much interest. People paused to observe him; and all unaware of their attention, he suddenly smiled charmingly, as at some gentle pleasantry in his own mind—something he had remembered from a book, no doubt. It was a wonderful smile, and vanished slowly, leaving a rapt look: evidently he was lost in musing upon architecture and sculpture and beautiful books. A girl whisking by in an automobile had time to guess, reverently, that the phrase in his mind was: "A Stately Home for Beautiful Books!" Dinner-tables would hear, that evening, how Talbot Potter stood there, oblivious of everything else, studying the Library!

This slight sketch of artistic reverie completed, he went on, proceeding a little more rapidly down the Avenue; presently turned over to the stage door of Wallack's, made his way through the ensuing passages, and appeared upon the vasty stage of the old theatre, where his company of actors awaited his coming to begin the rehearsal of a new play.

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CHAPTER II

"FIRST act, please, ladies and gentlemen!" Thus spake, without emotion, Packer, the stage-manager; but out in the dusky auditorium, Stewart Canby, the new playwright, began to tremble. It was his first rehearsal.

He and one other sat in the shadowy hollow of the orchestra, two obscure little shapes on the floor of the enormous cavern. The other was Talbot Potter's manager, Carson Tinker, a neat, grim, small, old man with a definite appearance of having long ago learned that after a little while life will beat anybody's game, no matter how good. He observed the nervousness of the playwright, but without interest. He had seen too many.

Young Canby's play was a study of egoism, being the portrait of a man wholly given over to selfish ambitions finally attained but "at the cost of every good thing in his life," including the loss of his "honour," his lady-love, and the trust and affection of his friends. Young Canby had worked

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patiently at his manuscript, rewriting, condensing, pouring over it the sincere sweat of his brow and the light of his boarding-house lamp during most of the evenings of two years, until at last he was able to tell his confidants, rather huskily, that there was "not one single superfluous word in it," not one that could possibly be cut, nor one that could be changed without "altering the significance of the whole work."

The moment was at hand when he was to see the vision of so many toilsome hours begin to grow alive. What had been no more than little black marks on white paper was now to become a living voice vibrating the actual air. No wonder, then, that tremors seized him: Pygmalion shook as Galatea began to breathe, and to young Canby it was no less a miracle that his black marks and white paper should thus come to life.

"Miss Ellsling!" called the stage-manager. "Miss Ellsling, you're on. You're on artificial stone bench in garden, down right. Mr. Nipper, you're on. You're over yonder, right cen——"

"Not at all!" interrupted Talbot Potter, who had taken his seat at a small table near the trough where the footlights lay asleep, like the row of night-watchmen they were. "Not at *all!*" he repeated

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sharply, thumping the table with his knuckles. "That's all out. It's cut. Nippert doesn't come on in this scene at all. You've got the original script there, Packer. Good heavens! Packer, can't you ever get anything right? Didn't I distinctly tell you—— Here! Come here! Not garden set, at all. Play it interior, same as act second. Look, Packer, look! Miss Ellsling down left, in chair by escritoire. In heaven's name, can you *read*, Packer?"

"Yessir, yessir. I see, sir, I see!" said Packer with piteous eagerness, taking the manuscript the star handed him.

"Now, then, Miss Ellsling, if you please——"

"I will have my tea indoors," Miss Ellsling began promptly, striking an imaginary bell. "I will have my tea indoors, to-day, I think, Pritchard. It is cooler indoors, to-day, I think, on the whole, and so it will be pleasanter to have my tea indoors to-day. Strike bell again. Do you hear, Pritchard?"

Out in the dimness beyond the stage the thin figure of the new playwright rose dazedly from an orchestra chair.

"What—what's this?" he stammered, the choked sounds he made not reaching the stage.

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"What's the matter?" The question came from Carson Tinker, but his tone was incurious, manifesting no interest whatever. Tinker's voice, like his pale, spectacled glance, was not tired; it was dead.

"Tea!" gasped Canby. "People are sick of tea! I didn't write any tea!"

"There isn't any," said Tinker. "The way he's got it, there's an interruption before the tea comes, and it isn't brought in."

"But she's ordered it! If it doesn't come the audience will wonder——"

"No," said Tinker. "They won't think of that. They won't hear her order it."

"Then, for heaven's sake, why has he put it in? I wrote this play to begin right in the story——"

"That's the trouble. They never hear the beginning. They're slamming seats, taking off wraps, looking round to see who's there. That's why we used to begin plays with servants dusting and 'Well-I-never-half-past-nine-and-the-young-master-not-yet-risen!'"

"I wrote it to begin with a garden scene," Canby protested, unheeding. "Why——"

"He's changed this act a good deal."

"But I wrote——"

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"He never uses garden sets. Not intimate enough; and they're a nuisance to light. I wouldn't worry about it."

"But it changed the whole signifi——"

"Well, talk to him about it," said Tinker, adding lifelessly, "I wouldn't argue with him much, though. I never knew anybody do anything with him that way yet."

Miss Ellsling, on the stage, seemed to be supplementing this remark. "Roderick Hanscom *is* a determined man," she said, in character. "He is hard as steel to a treacherous enemy, but he is tender and gentle to women and children. Only yesterday I saw him pick up a fallen crippled child from beneath the relentless horses' feet on a crossing, at the risk of his very life, and then as he placed it in the mother's arms, he smiled that wonderful smile of his, that wonderful smile of his that seems to brighten the whole world! Wait till you meet him. But that is his step now and you shall judge for yourselves! Let us *rise*, if you please, to give him befitting greeting."

"What—what!" gasped Canby.

"Sh!" Tinker whispered.

"But all I wrote for her to say, when Roderick

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Hanscom's name is mentioned, was, 'I don't think I like him.' My God!"

"*Sh!*"

"The Honourable Robert Hanscom!" shouted Packer, in a ringing voice as a stage-servant, or herald.

"It gives him an entrance, you see," murmured Tinker. "Your script just let him walk on."

"And all that horrible stuff about his wonderful smile," Canby babbled. "Think of his putting that in, himself."

"Well, you hadn't done it for him. It *is* a wonderful smile, isn't it?"

"My God!"

"Sh!"

Talbot Potter had stepped to the centre of the stage and was smiling the wonderful smile. "Mildred, and you, my other friends, good friends," he began, "for I know that you are all true friends here, and I can trust you with a secret very near my heart——"

"Most of them are supposed never to have seen him before," said Canby, hoarsely. "And she's just told them they could judge for themselves when——"

"They won't notice that."

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"You mean the *audience* won't——"

"No, they won't," said Tinker.

"But good heavens! it's 'Donald Gray,' the other character, that trusts *him* with the secret, and *he* betrays it later. This upsets the whole——"

"Well, talk to him. I can't help it."

"It is a political secret," Potter continued, reading from a manuscript in his hand, "and almost a matter of life and death. But I trust you with it openly and fearlessly because——"

At this point his voice was lost in a destroying uproar. Perceiving that the rehearsal was well under way, and that the star had made his entrance, two of the stage-hands attached to the theatre ascended to the flies and set up a great bellowing on high. "*Lower that strip!*" "*You don't want that strip lowered, I tell you!*" "*Oh, my Lord! Can't you lower that strip!*" Another workman at the rear of the stage began to saw a plank, and somebody else, concealed behind a bit of scenery, hammered terrifically upon metal. Altogether it was a successful outbreak.

Potter threw his manuscript upon the table, a gesture which caused the shoulders of Packer to move in a visible shudder, and the company, all

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eyes fixed upon the face of the star, suddenly wore the look of people watching a mysterious sealed packet from which a muffled ticking is heard. The bellowing and the sawing and the hammering increased in fury.

In the orchestra a rusty gleam of something like mummified pleasure passed unseen behind the spectacles of old Carson Tinker. "Stage-hands are the devil," he explained to the stupefied Canby. "Rehearsals bore them and they love to hear what an actor says when his nerves go to pieces. If Potter blows up they'll quiet down to enjoy it and then do it again pretty soon. If he doesn't blow up he'll take it out on somebody else."

Potter stood silent in the centre of the stage, expressionless, which seemed to terrify the stage-manager. "Just one *second*, Mr. Potter!" he screamed, his brow pearly with the anguish of apprehension. "*Just* one second, sir!"

He went hotfoot among the disturbers, protesting, commanding, imploring, and plausibly answering severe questions. "Well, when do you expect us to git this work done?" "We got to do our *work*, ain't we?" until finally the tumult ceased, the saw slowing down last of all, tapering off reluctantly into

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a silence of plaintive disappointment; whereupon Packer resumed his place, under a light at the side of the stage, turning the pages of his manuscript with fluttering fingers and keeping his eyes fixed guiltily upon it. The company of actors also carefully removed their gaze from the star and looked guilty.

Potter allowed the fatal hush to continue, while the culpability of Packer and the company seemed mysteriously to increase until they all reeked with it. The stage-hands had withdrawn in a grieved manner somewhere into the huge rearward spaces of the old building. They belonged to the theatre, not to Potter, and, besides, they had a union. But the actors were dependent upon Potter for the coming winter's work and wages; they were his employees.

At last he spoke: "We will go on with the rehearsal," he said quietly.

"Ah!" murmured old Tinker. "He'll take it out on somebody else." And with every precaution not to jar down a seat in passing, he edged his way to the aisle and went softly thereby to the extreme rear of the house. He was an employee, too.

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CHAPTER III

IT WAS a luckless lady who helped to fulfill the prediction. Technically she was the "ingénue"; publicly she was "Miss Carol Lyston"; legally she was a Mrs. Surbilt, being wife to the established leading-man of that ilk, Vorly Surbilt. Miss Lyston had come to the rehearsal in a condition of exhausted nerves, owing to her husband's having just accepted, over her protest, a "road" engagement with a lady-star of such susceptible gallantry she had never yet been known to resist falling in love with her leading-man before she quarrelled with him. Miss Lyston's protest having lasted the whole of the preceding night, and not at all concluding with Mr. Surbilt's departure, about breakfast-time, avowedly to seek total anæsthesia by means of a long list of liquors —which he named—she had spent the hours before rehearsal interviewing female acquaintances who had been members of the susceptible lady's company —a proceeding which indicates that she deliberately courted hysteria.

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Shortly after the outraged rehearsal had been resumed, she unfortunately uttered a loud, dry sob, startlingly irrelevant to the matter in hand. It came during the revelation of "Roderick Hanscom's" secret, and Potter stopped instantly.

"Who did that?"

"Miss Lyston, sir," Packer responded loyally, such matters being part of his duty.

The star turned to face the agitated criminal. "Miss Lyston," he said, delaying each syllable to pack it more solidly with ice, "will you be good enough to inform this company if there is anything in your lines to warrant your breaking into a speech of mine with a horrible noise like that?"

"Nothing."

"Then perhaps you will inform us why you do break into a speech of mine with a horrible noise like that?"

"I only coughed, Mr. Potter," said Miss Lyston, shaking.

"Coughed!" he repeated slowly, and then with a sudden tragic fury shouted at the top of his splendid voice, "COUGHED!" He swung away from her, and strode up and down the stage, struggling with emotion, while the stricken company fastened their

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eyes to their strips of manuscript, as if in study, and looked neither at him nor Miss Lyston.

"You only *coughed!*" He paused before her in his stride. "Is it your purpose to *cough* during my speeches when this play is produced before an audience?" He waited for no reply, but taking his head wofully in his hands, began to pace up and down again, turning at last toward the dark auditorium to address his invisible manager:

"Really, really, Mr. Tinker," he cried, despairingly, "we shall have to change some of these people. I can't act with—— Mr. Tinker! Where's Mr. Tinker? Mr. Tinker! My soul! He's gone! He always *is* gone when I want him! I wonder how many men would bear what I——" But here he interrupted himself unexpectedly. "Go on with the rehearsal! Packer, where were we?"

"Here, sir, right here," brightly responded Packer, ready finger upon the proper spot in the manuscript. "You had just begun, 'Nothing in this world but that one thing can defeat my certain election and nothing but that one thing *shall* de——'"

"That will do," thundered his master. "Are you going to play the part? Get out of the way and let's get on with the act, in heaven's name!

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Down stage a step, Miss Ellsling. No; I said *down*. A step, not a mile! There! Now, if you consent to be ready, ladies and gentlemen. Very well. 'Nothing in this world but that one thing can defeat my certain election and noth——'" Again he interrupted himself unexpectedly. In the middle of the word there came a catch in his voice; he broke off, and whirling once more upon the miserable Miss Lyston, he transfixed her with a forefinger and a yell.

"It wasn't a cough! What *was* that horrible noise you made?"

Miss Lyston, being unable to reply in words, gave him for answer an object-lesson which demonstrated plainly the nature of the horrible noise. She broke into loud, consecutive sobs, while Potter, very little the real cause of them, altered in expression from indignation to the neighbourhood of lunacy.

"She's doing this on purpose!" he cried. "What's the matter with her? She's sick! Miss Lyston, you're sick! Packer, get her away—take her away. She's sick! Send her home—send her home in a *cab!* Packer!"

"Yes, Mr. Potter, I'll arrange it. Don't be disturbed."

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The stage-manager was already at the sobbing lady's side, and she leaned upon him gratefully, continuing to produce the symptoms of her illness.

"Put her in a cab at once," said the star, somewhat recovered from his consternation. "You can pay the cabman," he added. "Make her as comfortable as you can; she's really ill. Anybody can see she's ill. Miss Lyston, you shouldn't have tried to rehearse when you're so ill. Do everything possible for Miss Lyston's comfort, Packer."

He followed the pair as they entered the passageway to the stage door; then, Miss Lyston's demonstrations becoming less audible, he halted abruptly, and his brow grew dark with suspicion. When Packer returned, he beckoned him aside. "Didn't she seem all right as soon as she got out of my sight?"

"No, sir, she seemed pretty badly upset."

"What about?"

"Oh, something entirely outside of rehearsal, sir," Packer answered in haste. "Entirely outside. She wanted to know if I'd heard any gossip about her husband, lately. That's it, Mr. Potter."

"You don't think she was shamming just to get off?"

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"Oh, not at all. I——"

"Ha! She may have fooled you, Packer, or perhaps—perhaps"—he paused, frowning—"perhaps *you* were trying to fool me, too. I don't know your private life: you may have reasons to help her de——"

"Mr. Potter!" cried the distressed man. "What could be my object? I don't know Miss Lyston off. I was only telling you the simple truth."

"How do *I* know?" Potter gave him a piercing look. "People are always trying to take advantage of me."

"But, Mr. Potter, I——"

"Don't get it into your head that I am too easy, Packer! You think you've got a luxurious thing of it here, with me, but——" He concluded with an ominous shake of the head in lieu of words, then returned to the centre of the stage. "Are we to be all day getting on with this rehearsal?"

Packer flew to the table and seized the manuscript he had left there. "All ready, sir! 'Nothing in this world but one thing can defeat'—and so on, so on. All ready, sir!"

The star made no reply but to gaze upon him stonily, a stare which produced another dreadful

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silence. Packer tried to smile—a lamentable sight.

"Something wrong, Mr. Potter?" he finally ventured, desperately.

The answer came in a voice cracking with emotional strain: "I wonder how many men bear what I bear? I wonder how many men would pay a stage-manager the salary I pay, and then do all his work for him!"

"Mr. Potter, if you'll tell me what's the matter," Packer quavered: "if you'll only tell me——"

"The understudy, idiot! Where is the understudy to read Miss Lyston's part? You haven't got one! I knew it. I told you last week to engage an understudy for the women's parts, and you haven't done it. I knew it, I knew it! God help me I knew it!"

"But I did, sir. I've got her here." Packer ran to the back of the stage, shouting loudly: "Miss—oh, Miss—I forget-your-name! Understudy! Miss——"

"I'm here!"

It was an odd, slender voice that spoke, just behind Talbot Potter, and he turned to stare at a little figure in black—she had come so quietly out of the shadows of the scenery into Miss Lyston's

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place that no one had noticed. She was indefinite of outline still, in the sparse light of that cavernous place; and, with a veil lifted just to the level of her brows, under a shadowing black hat, not much was to be clearly discerned of her except that she was small and pale and had bright eyes. But even the words she spoke proved the peculiar quality of her voice: it was like the tremolo of a zither string; and at the sound of it the actors on each side of her instinctively moved a step back for a better view of her, while in his lurking place old Tinker let his dry lips open a little, which was as near as he ever came, nowadays, to a look of interest. He had noted that this voice, sweet as rain, and vibrant, but not loud, was the ordinary speaking voice of the understudy, and that her "I'm here," had sounded, soft and clear, across the deep orchestra to the last row in the house.

"Of course!" Packer cried. "*There* she is, Mr. Potter! There's Miss—Miss——"

"Is her name 'Missmiss?'" the star demanded bitterly.

"No, sir. I've forgotten it, just this moment, Mr. Potter, but I've got it. I've got it right here." He began frantically to turn out the contents of his

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pockets. "It's in my memorandum book, if I could only find——"

"The devil, the devil!" shouted Potter. "A fine understudy you've got for us! She sees me standing here like—like a statue—delaying the whole rehearsal, while we wait for you to find her name, and she won't open her lips!" He swept the air with a furious gesture, and a subtle faint relief became manifest throughout the company at this token that the newcomer was indeed to fill Miss Lyston's place for one rehearsal at least. "Why don't you tell us your name?" he roared.

"I understood," said the zither-sweet voice, "that I was never to speak to you unless you directly asked me a question. My——"

"My soul! Have you got a *name?*"

"Wanda Malone."

Potter had never heard it until that moment, but his expression showed that he considered it another outrage.

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CHAPTER IV

THE rehearsal proceeded, and, under that cover, old Tinker came noiselessly down the aisle and resumed his seat beside Canby, who was uttering short, broken sighs, and appeared to have been trying with fair success to give himself a shampoo.

"It's ruined, Mr. Tinker!" he moaned, and his accompanying gesture was misleading, seeming to indicate that he alluded to his hair. "It's *all* ruined if he sticks to these horrible lines he's put in—people *told* me I ought to have it in my contract that nothing could be changed. I was trying to make the audience see the tragedy of egoism in my play—and how people get to hating an egoist. I made 'Roderick Hanscom' a disagreeable character on purpose, and —oh, listen to *that!*"

Miss Ellsling and Talbot Potter stood alone, near the front of the stage. "Why do you waste such goodness on me, Roderick?" Miss Ellsling was inquiring. "It is noble, and I feel that I am unworthy of you."

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"No, Mildred, believe me," Potter read from his manuscript, "I would rather decline the nomination and abandon my career, and go to live in some quiet spot far from all this, than that you should know one single moment's unhappiness, for you mean far more to me than worldly success." He kissed her hand with reverence, and lifted his head slowly, facing the audience with a rapt gaze; his wonderful smile—that ineffable smile of abnegation and benignity—just beginning to dawn.

Coming from behind him, and therefore unable to see his face, Miss Wanda Malone advanced in her character of ingénue, speaking with an effect of gayety: "Now what are you two good people conspiring about?"

Potter stamped the floor; there was wrenched from him an incoherent shriek containing fragments of profane words and ending distinguishably with: "*It's that Missmiss again!*"

Packer impelled himself upon Miss Malone, pushing her back. "No, no, no!" he cried. "Count ten! Count ten before you come down with that speech. You mustn't interrupt Mr. Potter, Miss—Miss——"

"It was my cue," she said composedly, showing

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her little pamphlet of typewritten manuscript. "Wasn't I meant to speak on the cue?"

Talbot Potter recovered himself sufficiently to utter a cry of despair: "And *these* are the kind of people an artist must work with!" He lifted his arms to heaven, calling upon the high gods for pity; then, with a sudden turn of fury, ran to the back of the stage and came mincing forward, evidently intending saturnine mimicry, repeating the ingénue's speech in a mocking falsetto: "*Now what are you two good people conspiring about?*" After that he whirled upon her, demanding with ferocity: "You've got *something* you can think with in your head, haven't you, Missmiss? Then what do you think of *that?*"

Miss Malone smiled, and it was a smile that would have gone a long way at a college dance. Here, it made the pitying company shudder for her. "I think it's a silly, makeshift sort of a speech," she said cheerfully, in which opinion the unhappy playwright out in the audience hotly agreed. "It's a bit of threadbare archness, and if I were to play Miss Lyston's part, I'd be glad to have it changed!"

Potter looked dazed. "It is your idea," he said in a ghastly voice, "that I was asking for your im-

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pression of the dramatic and literary value of that line?"

She seemed surprised. "Weren't you?"

It was too much for Potter. He had brilliant and unusual powers of expression, but this was beyond them. He went to the chair beside the little table, flung himself upon it, his legs outstretched, his arms dangling inert, and stared haggardly upward at nothing.

Packer staggered into the breach. "You interrupted the smile, Miss—Mi——"

"Miss Malone," she prompted.

"You interrupted the smile, Miss Malone. Mr. Potter gives them the smile there. You must count ten for it, after your cue. Ten—slow. Count slow. Mark it on your sides, Miss—ah—Miss. 'Count ten for smile.' Write it down please, Miss—Miss——"

Potter spoke wearily. "Be kind enough to let me know, Packer, when you and Missmiss can bring yourselves to permit the rehearsal to continue."

"All ready, sir," said Packer briskly. "All ready now, Mr. Potter." And upon the star's limply rising, Miss Ellsling, most tactful of leading women, went back to his cue with a change of

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emphasis in her reading that helped to restore him somewhat to his poise. "It is noble," she repeated, "and I feel that I am unworthy of *you!*"

Counting ten slowly proved to be the proper deference to the smile, and Miss Malone was allowed to come down the stage and complete, undisturbed, her ingénue request to know what the two good people were conspiring about. Thereafter the rehearsal went on in a strange, unreal peace like that of a prairie noon in the cyclone season.

"Notice that girl?" old Tinker muttered, as Wanda Malone finished another ingénue question with a light laugh, as commanded by her manuscript. "She's frightened but she's steady."

"What girl?" Canby was shampooing himself feverishly and had little interest in girls. "I made it a disagreeable character because——"

"I mean the one he's letting out on—Malone," said Tinker. "Didn't you notice her voice? Her laugh reminds me of Fanny Caton's—and Dora Preston's——"

"Who?" Canby asked vaguely.

"Oh, nobody you'd remember: some old-time actresses that had their day—and died—long ago. This girl's voice made me think of them."

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"She may, she may," said Canby hurriedly. "Mr. Tinker, the play is ruined. He's tangled the whole act up so that I can't tell what it's about myself. Instead of Roderick Hanscom's being a man that people dislike for his conceit and selfishness he's got him absolutely turned round. I oughtn't to allow it—but everything's so different from what I thought it would be! He doesn't seem to know I'm here. I came prepared to read the play to the company: I thought he'd want me to."

"Oh, no," said Tinker. "He never does that."

"Why not?"

"Wastes time for one thing. The actors don't listen except when their own parts are being read."

"Good gracious!"

"Their own parts are all they have to look out for," the old man informed him dryly. "I've known actors to play a long time in parts that didn't appear in the last act, and never know how the play ended."

"Good gracious!"

"Never cared, either," Tinker added.

"*Good gr*——"

"*Sh!* He's breaking out again!"

A shriek of agony came from the stage. "Pack-*e-r-r-!* *Where* did you find this Missmiss understudy?

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Can't you get me people of experience? I really cannot bear this kind of thing—I can *not!*" And Potter flung himself upon the chair, leaving the slight figure in black standing alone in the centre of the stage. He sprang up again, however, surprisingly, upon the very instant of despairing collapse. "What do you mean by this perpetual torture of me?" he wailed at her. "Don't you know what you *did?*"

"No, Mr. Potter." She looked at him bravely, but she began to grow red.

"You don't?" he cried incredulously. "You don't know what you did? You *moved!* How are they going to get my face if you *move?* Don't you know enough to hold a picture and not ruin it by moving?"

"There was a movement written for that cue," she said, a little tremulously. "The business in the script is, 'Showing that she is touched by Roderick's nobleness, lifts handkerchief impulsive gesture to eyes.'"

"Not," he shouted, "*not* during the SMILE!"

"Oh!" she cried remorsefully. "Have I done that again?"

"'Again!' I don't know how many times you've done it!" He flung his arms wide, with hands out-

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spread and fingers vibrating. "You do it every time you get the chance! You do it perpetually! You don't do anything else! It's all you live for!"

He hurled his manuscript violently at the table, Packer making a wonderful pick-up catch of it just as it touched the floor.

"That's all!" And the unhappy artist sank into the chair in a crumpled stupor.

"Ten o'clock to-morrow morning, ladies and gentlemen!" Packer called immediately, with brisk cheerfulness. "Please notice: to-morrow's rehearsal is in the morning. Ten o'clock to-morrow morning!"

"Tell the understudy to wait, Packer," said the star abysmally, and Packer addressed himself to the departing backs of the company:

"Mr. Potter wants to speak to Miss—Miss——"

"Malone," prompted the owner of the name, without resentment.

"Wait a moment, Miss Malone," said Potter, looking up wearily. "Is Mr. Tinker anywhere about?"

"I'm here, Mr. Potter." Tinker came forward to the orchestra railing.

"I've been thinking about this play, Mr. Tinker,"

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Potter said, shaking his head despondently. "I don't know about it. I'm very, very doubtful about it." He peered over Tinker's head, squinting his eyes, and seemed for the first time to be aware of the playwright's presence. "Oh, are you there, Mr. Canby? When did *you* come in?"

"I've been here all the time," said the dishevelled Canby, coming forward. "I supposed it was my business to be here, but——"

"Very glad to have you if you wish," Potter interrupted gloomily. "Any time. Any time you like. I was just telling Mr. Tinker that I don't know about your play. I don't know if it'll do at all."

"If you'd play it," Canby began, "the way I wrote it——"

"In the first place," Potter said with sudden vehemence, "it lacks Punch! Where's your Punch in this play, Mr. Canby? Where is there any Punch whatever in the whole four acts? Surely, after this rehearsal, you don't mean to claim that the first act has one single ounce of Punch in it!"

"But you've twisted this act all round," the unhappy young man protested. "The way you have it I can't tell *what* it's got to it. I meant Roderick Hanscom to be a disagr——"

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"Mr. Canby," said the star, rising impressively, "if we played that act the way you wrote it, we'd last just about four minutes of the opening night. You gave me absolutely nothing to *do!* Other people talked at me and I had to stand there and be talked at for twenty minutes straight, like a blithering ninny!"

"Well, as you have it, the other actors have to stand there like ninnies," poor Canby retorted miserably, "while you talk at them almost the whole time."

"My soul!" Potter struck the table with the palm of his hand. "Do you think anybody's going to pay two dollars to watch me listen to my company for three hours? No, my dear man, your play's got to give me something to do! You'll have to rewrite the second and third acts. I've done what I could for the first, but, good God! Mr. Canby, I can't write your whole play for you! You'll have to get some Punch into it or we'll never be able to go on with it."

"I don't know what you mean," said the playwright helplessly. "I never did know what people mean by Punch."

"Punch? It's what grips 'em," Potter returned

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with vehemence. "Punch is what keeps 'em sitting on the edge of their seats. Big love scenes! They've got Punch. Or a big scene with a man. Give me a big scene with a man." He illustrated his meaning with startling intensity, crouching and seizing an imaginary antagonist by the throat, shaking him and snarling between his clenched teeth, while his own throat swelled and reddened: "*Now, damn you! You dog! So on, so on, so on! Zowie!*" Suddenly his figure straightened. "Then change. See?" He became serene, almost august. "'No! I will not soil these hands with you. So on, so on, so on. I *give* you your worthless life. Go!'" He completed his generosity by giving Canby and Tinker the smile, after which he concluded much more cheerfully: "Something like that, Mr. Canby, and we'll have some real Punch in your play."

"But there isn't any chance for that kind of a scene in it," the playwright objected. "It's the study of an egoist, a disagree——"

"There!" exclaimed Potter. "That's it! Do you think people are going to pay two dollars to see Talbot Potter behave like a cad? They won't do it; they pay two dollars to see me as I am—not pretending to be the kind of a man your 'Roderick Hanscom'

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was. No, Mr. Canby, I accepted your play because it *has* got quite a fair situation in the third act, and because I thought I saw a chance in it to keep some of the strength of 'Roderick Hanscom' and yet make him lovable."

"But, great heavens! if you make him lovable the character's ruined. Besides, the audience won't want to see him lose the girl at the end and 'Donald Grey' get her!"

"No, they won't; that's it exactly," said Potter thoughtfully. "You'll have to fix that, Mr. Canby. 'Roderick Hanscom' will have to win her by a great sacrifice in the last act. A great, strong, lovable man, Mr. Canby; that's the kind of character I want to play: a big, sweet, lovable fellow, with the heart of a child, that makes a great sacrifice for a woman. I don't want to play 'egoists'; I don't want to play character parts. No." He shook his head musingly, and concluded, the while a light of ineffable sweetness shone from his remarkable eyes: "Mr. Canby, no! My audience comes to see Talbot Potter. You go over these other acts and write the part so that I can play *myself*."

The playwright gazed upon him, inarticulate, and Potter, shaking himself slightly, like one aroused

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from a pleasant little reverie, turned to the waiting figure of the girl.

"What is it, Miss Malone?" he asked mildly. "Did you want to speak to me?"

"You told Mr. Packer to ask me to wait," she said.

"Did I? Oh, yes, so I did. If you please, take off your hat and veil, Miss Malone?"

She gave him a startled look; then, without a word, slowly obeyed.

"Ah, yes," he said a moment later. "We'll find something else for Miss Lyston when she recovers. You will keep the part."

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CHAPTER V

WHEN Canby (with his hair smoothed) descended to the basement dining room of his Madison Avenue boarding-house that evening, his table comrades gave him an effective entrance: they rose, waving napkins and cheering, and there were cries of "Author! Author!" "Speech!" and "Cher maître!"

The recipient of these honours bore them with an uneasiness attributed to modesty, and making inadequate response, sat down to his soup with no importunate appetite.

"Seriously, though," said a bearded man opposite, who always broke into everything with "seriously though," or else, "all joking aside," and had thereby gained a reputation for conservatism and soundness —"seriously, though, it must have been a great experience to take charge of the rehearsal of such a company as Talbot Potter's."

"Tell us how it felt, Canby, old boy," said another. "How does it feel to sit up there like

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a king makin' everybody step around to suit you?"

Other neighbours took it up.

"Any pretty girls in the company, Can?"

"How does it feel to be a great dramatist, old man?"

"When you goin' to hire a valet-chauffeur?"

"Better ask him when he's goin' to take us to rehearsal, to see him in his glory."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said the hostess deprecatingly, "Miss Cornish is trying to speak to Mr. Canby."

Miss Cornish, a middle-aged lady in black lace, sat at her right, at the head of the largest table, being the most paying of these paying guests, by which virtue she held also the ingleside premiership of the parlour overhead. She was reputed to walk among gentles, and to have a high taste in letters and the drama; for she was chief of an essay club, had a hushing manner, and often quoted with precision from reviews, or from such publishers' advertisements as contained no slang; and she was a member of one of the leagues for patronizing the theatre in moderation.

"Mr. Canby," said the hostess pleasantly, "Miss Cornish wishes to——"

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This obtained the attention of the assembly, while Canby, at the other end of the room, sat back in his chair with the unenthusiastic air of a man being served with papers.

"Yes, Miss Cornish."

Miss Cornish cleared her throat, not practically, but with culture, as preliminary to an address. "I was saying, Mr. Canby," she began, "that I had a suggestion to make which may not only interest you, but certain others of us who do not enjoy equal opportunities in some matters—as—as others of us who do. Indeed, I believe it will interest all of us without regard to—to—to this. What I was about to suggest was that since to-day you have had a very interesting experience, not only interesting because you have entered into a professional as well as personal friendship with one of our foremost artists—an artist whose work is cultivated always—but also interesting because there are some of us here whose more practical occupations and walk in life must nesessarily withhold them from—from this. What I meant to suggest was that, as this prevents them from—from this—would it not be a favourable opportunity for them to—to glean some commentary upon the actual methods of a field of

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art? Personally, it happens that whenever opportunities and invitations have been—have been urged, other duties intervened, but though, on that account never having been actually present, I am familiar, of course, through conversation with great artists and memoirs and—and other sources of literature—with the procedure and etiquette of rehearsal. But others among us, no doubt through lack of leisure, are perhaps less so than—than this. What I wished to suggest was that, not now, but after dinner, we all assemble quietly, in the large parlour upstairs, of which Mrs. Reibold has kindly consented to allow us the use for the evening, for this purpose, and that you, Mr. Canby, would then give us an informal talk——" (She was momentarily interrupted by a deferential murmur of "*Hear! Hear!*" from everybody.) "What I meant to suggest," she resumed, smiling graciously as from a platform, "was a sort of descriptive lecture, of course wholly informal—not so much upon your little play itself, Mr. Canby, for I believe we are all familiar with its subject-matter, but what would perhaps be more improving in artistic ways would be that you give us your impressions of this little experience of yours to-day while it is fresh in your

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mind. I would suggest that you tell us, simply, and in your own way, exactly what was the form of procedure at rehearsal, so that those of us not so fortunate as to be already *en rapport* with such matters may form a helpful and artistic idea of—of this. I would suggest that you go into some details of this, perhaps adding whatever anecdotes or incidents of—of—of the day—you think would give additional value to this. I would suggest that you tell us, for instance, how you were received upon your arrival, who took you to the most favourable position for observing the performance, and what was said. We should be glad to hear also, I am sure, any artistic thoughts or—or knowledge—Mr. Potter may have let fall in the green-room; or even a few witticisms might not be out of place, if you should recall these. We should all like to know, I am sure, what Mr. Potter's method of conceiving his part was. Also, does he leave entire freedom to his company in the creation of their own rôles, or does he aid them? Many questions, no doubt, occur to all of us. For instance: Did Mr. Potter offer you any suggestions for changes and alterations that might aid to develop the literary and artistic value of the pl——"

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The placid voice, flowing on in gentle great content of itself (while all the boarders gallantly refrained from eating), was checked by an interruption which united into one shattering impact the effects of *lése-majesté* and of violence.

"Couldn't! No! No parlour! *Horrib*——"

The words mingled in the throat of the playwright, producing an explosion somewhere between choke and bellow, as he got upon his feet, overturning his chair and coincidentally dislodging several articles of china and glassware. He stood among the ruins for one moment, publicly wiping his brow with a napkin, then plunged, murmuring, out of the room and up the stairway; and, before any of the company had recovered speech, the front door was heard to slam tumultuously, its reverberations being simultaneous with the sound of footsteps running down the stoop.

Turning northward upon the pavement, the fugitive hurriedly passed the two lighted windows of the dining room: they rattled with a concussion—the outburst of suddenly released voices beginning what was to be a protracted wake over the remains of his reputation as a gentleman. He fled, flinging on his overcoat as he went. In his pockets were

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portions of the manuscript of his play, already distorted since rehearsal to suit the new nobleness of "Roderick Hanscom," and among these inky sheets was a note from Talbot Potter, received just before dinner:

DEAR MR. CANBY:

Come up to my apartments at the Pantheon after dinner and let me see what changes you have been able to make in the second and third acts. I should like to look at them before deciding to put on another play I have been considering.

Hastily y'rs,
TAL'T POTTER.

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CHAPTER VI

CANBY walked fast, the clamorous dining room seeming to pursue him, and the thought of what figure he had cut there filling him with horror of himself, though he found a little consolation in wondering if he hadn't insulted Miss Cornish because he was a genius and couldn't help doing queer things. That solace was slight, indeed: Canby was only twenty-seven, but he was frightened.

The night before he had been as eagerly happy as a boy on Christmas Eve. He had finished his last day at the office, and after initiating the youth who was to take his desk, had parted with his employer genially, but to the undeniable satisfaction of both. The new career, opening so gloriously, a month earlier, with Talbot Potter's acceptance of the play, was thus definitely adopted, and no old one left to fall back upon. And Madison Avenue, after dark, shows little to reassure a new playwright who carries in his pocket a note ending with the words,

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"before deciding to put on another play I have been considering." It was Bleak Street, that night, for young Stewart Canby, and a bleak, bleak walk he took therein.

Desperate alterations were already scratched into the manuscript: plans for more and more ran overlapping one another in his mind, accompanied by phrases—echoes and fragments of Talbot Potter: "Punch! What this play needs is Punch!" "Big love scenes!" "Big scene with a man!" "Great sacrifice for a woman!" "Big-hearted, lovable fellow!" "You dog! So on, so on!" "*Zowie!*" He must get all this into the play and yet preserve his "third act situation," leniently admitted to be "quite a fair" one. Slacking his gait somewhat, the tormented young man lifted his hat in order to run his hand viciously through his hair, which he seemed to blame for everything. Then he muttered, under his breath, indignantly: "Darn you, let me alone!"

Curious bedevilment! It was not Talbot Potter whom he thus adjured: it was Wanda Malone. And yet, during the rehearsal, he had not once consciously thought of the understudy; and he had come away from the theatre occupied—exclusively,

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he would have sworn—with the predicament in which he found himself and his play. Surely that was enough to fill and overflow any new playwright's mind, but, about half an hour after he had reached his room and set to work upon the manuscript of the second act, he discovered that he had retained, unawares, a singularly clear impression of Miss Malone.

Then, presently, he realized that distinct pictures of her kept coming between him and his work, and that her voice rang softly and persistently in his ear. Over and over in that voice's slender music —plaintive, laughing, reaching everywhere so clearly —he heard the detested "line": "What are you two good people conspiring about?" Over and over he saw the slow, comprehending movement with which she removed her hat and veil to let Talbot Potter judge her. And as she stood, with that critic's eye searching her, Canby remembered that through some untraceable association of ideas he had inexplicably thought of a drawing of "Florence Dombey" in an old set of Dickens engravings he had seen at his grandfather's in his boyhood—and had not seen since. And he remembered the lilac bushes in bloom on a May morning at his grand-

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father's. Somehow she made him think of them, too.

And as he sat at his desk, striving to concentrate upon the manuscript, the clearness with which Wanda Malone came before him increased: she became more and more vivid to him, and she would not be dismissed; she persisted and insisted, becoming first an annoyance, and then, as he fought the witchery, a serious detriment to his writing. She became part of every thought about his play, and of every other thought. He did not want her; he felt no interest in her; he had vital work to do—and she haunted him, seemed to be in the very room with him. He worked in spite of her, but she pursued him none the less constantly: she had gone down the stairs to dinner with him; she floated before him throughout the torture of Miss Cornish's address; she was present even when he exploded and fled; she was with him now, in this desolate walk toward Talbot Potter's apartment—the pale, symmetrical little face and the relentless sweet voice commandeering the attention he wanted desperately to keep upon what he meant to say to Potter.

Once before in his life he had suffered such an

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experience: that of having his thoughts possessed, against his will, by a person he did not know and did not care to know. It had followed his happening to see an intoxicated truck-driver lying beneath an overturned wagon. "Easy, boys! Don' mangle me!" the man kept begging his rescuers. And Canby recalled how "Easy, boys! Don' mangle me!" sounded plaintively in his ears for days, bothering him in his work at the office. Remembering it now, he felt a spiteful satisfaction in classing that obsession with this one. It seemed at least a step toward teaching Miss Wanda Malone to know her place.

But he got no respite from the siege, and was still incessantly beleaguered when he encountered the marble severities of the Pantheon Apartments' entrance hall and those of its field-marshal, who paraded him stonily to the elevator. Mr. Potter's apartment was upon the twelfth floor, a fact stated in a monosyllable by the field-marshal, and confirmed, upon the opening of the cage at that height, by Mr. Potter's voice melodiously belling a flourish of laughter on the other side of a closed door bearing his card. It was rich laughter, cadenced and deep and loud, but so musically modulated that, though

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it might never seem impromptu, even old Carson Tinker had once declared that he liked to listen to it almost as much as Potter did.

Old Carson Tinker was listening to it now, as Canby discovered, after a lisping Japanese had announced him at the doorway of a cream-coloured Louis Sixteenth salon: an exquisite apartment, delicately personalized here and there by luxurious fragilities which would have done charmingly, on the stage, for a marquise's boudoir. Old Tinker, in evening dress, sat uncomfortably, sideways, upon the edge of a wicker and brocade "chaise-longue," finishing a tiny glass of chartreuse, while Talbot Potter, in the middle of the room, took leave of a second guest who had been dining with him.

Potter was concluding the rendition of hilarity which had penetrated to the outer hall, and merely waving the playwright toward Tinker, swept the same gesture upward to complete it by resting a cordial hand upon the departing guest's shoulder. This personage, a wasp-figured, languorous youth, with pale plastered hair over a talcum face, flicked his host lightly upon the breast with a pair of white gloves.

"None the less, Pottuh," he said, "why shouldn't

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you play Othello as a mulatto? I maintain, you see, it would be taking a step in technique; they'd get the face, you see. Then I want you to do something really and truly big: Œdipus. Why not Œdipus? Think of giving the States a thing like Œdipus done as you could do it! Of coss, I don't say you could ever be another Mewnay-Sooyay. No. I don't go that far. You haven't Mewnay-Sooyay's technique. But you could give us just the savour of Attic culture—at least the savour, you see. The mere savour would be something. Why should you keep on producing these cheap little plays they foist on you? Oh, I know you always score a personal success in the wahst of them, but they've never given you a Big character—and the play, outside of you, is always piffle. Of coss, you know what I've always wanted you to do, what I've constantly insisted in print: Rostand. You commission Rostand to do one of his magnificent things for you and we serious men will do our part. Now, my duh good chap, I must be getting on, or the little gal will be telephoning all round the town!" He turned to the door, pausing upon the threshold. "Now, *don't* let any of these cheap little fellows foist any of their cheap little plays on you. This

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for my stirrup-cup: you cable Rostand to-morrow. Drop the cheap little things and cable Rostand. Tell him I suggested it, if you like." He disappeared in the hallway, calling back: "My duh Pottuh, good-night!" And the outer door was heard to close.

Canby, feeling a natural prejudice against the personage, glanced uneasily at Talbot Potter's face and was surprised to find that fine bit of modelling contorted with rage. The sight of this emotion was reassuring, but its source was a mystery, for it had seemed to the playwright that the wasp-waisted youth's remarks—though horribly damaging to the cheap little Canbys with their cheap little "Roderick Hanscoms"—were on the whole rather flattering to the subject of them, and betokened a real interest in his career.

"Ass!" said Potter.

Canby exhaled a breath of relief. He began to feel that it might be possible to like this man.

"Ass!" said Potter, striding up and down the room. "Ass! Ass! Ass! Ass!"

And Canby felt easier and happier. He foresaw, too, that there would be no cabling to Rostand, a thing he had naïvely feared, for a moment, as imminent.

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Potter halted, bursting into speech less monosyllabic but no less vehement: "Mr. Tinker, did you ever see Mounet-Sully?"

"No."

"Did you, Mr. Canby?"

"No."

"'*Mewnay-Sooyay!*'" Potter mimicked the pronunciation of his adviser. "'*Mewnay-Sooyay! Of coss I don't say YOU could ever be another Mewnay-Sooyay!*' Ass! I'll tell you what Mounet-Sully's 'technique' amounts to, Mr. Tinker. It's *yell!* Just yell, yell, yell! Does he think I can't yell! Why, *Packer* could open his mouth like a hippopotamus and *yell* through a part! Ass!"

"Was that young man a—a critic?" Canby asked.

"No!" shouted Potter. "There aren't any!"

"He writes about theatrical matters," said Carson Tinker. "Talky-talk writing: 'the drama'—'temperament'—'people of cultivation'—quotes Latin or Italian or something. 'Technique' is his star word: he plays 'technique' for a hand every other line. Doesn't do any harm; in fact, I think he does us a good deal of good. Lots of people read that talky-talk writing nowadays. Not in New

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York, but in road-towns, where they have plenty of time. This fellow's never against any show much, unless he takes a notion. You slip 'dolsy far nienty' or something about Danty or logarithms somewhere into your play, where it won't delay the action much, and he'll be for you."

Canby nodded and laughed eagerly. Tinker seemed to take it for granted that "Roderick Hanscom" was to be produced in spite of "another play I have been considering."

"There *aren't* any critics, I tell you!" Potter stormed. "Mounet-Sully!"

"Well," said old Tinker quietly, "I'd like to believe it, but people making a living that way have ruined a good many million dollars' worth of property in this town. Some of it was very good property." He paused, and added: "Some of it was mine, too."

"Good property?" said the playwright with fresh uneasiness. "You mean the critics sometimes ruin a *good* play?"

"How do *they* know a good play—or good acting?" Tinker returned placidly. "Every play you ever saw in your life, some people in the audience said they thought it was good: some said it was

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bad. How do critics know any more about it than anybody else? For instance, how can anybody that hasn't been in the business tell what's good acting and what's a good part?"

"But a critic—aren't critics in the bus——"

"No. They aren't theatrical people," said Tinker dryly. "They're writers."

"But some of them must have studied from the inside," Canby urged, feeling that "Roderick Hanscom's" chances were getting slighter and slighter. "Some of them must have either been managers for a while, or actors—or had plays pro——"

"No," said Tinker. "If they had, they wouldn't do for critics. They wouldn't have the heart."

"They oughtn't to have so much power!" the young man exclaimed passionately. "Think of a playwright working on his play—two years, maybe—night after night—and then, all in one swoop, these fellows that you say don't know anything——"

"Power!" Potter laughed contemptuously. "Tinker, you're in your dotage! Look at what I've done: Haven't I made my way in spite of everything they could do to stifle me? And have I ever compromised for one moment? Haven't I gone my own way, absolutely?"

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"Yes." Tinker's face was more cryptic than usual. "Yes, indeed!"

"Power! Haven't I made them eat out of my hand? Look at that ass—glad to crawl in here and nibble a crust from my table to-night! Ass!" He had halted for a second, in front of the manager, but resumed his pacing with a mutter of subterranean thunder: "Mounet-Sully!"

"Hasn't the public got a mind?" cried Canby. "Doesn't the public understand that a *good* play might be ruined by these scoundrels?"

Old Tinker returned his chartreuse glass to the case whence it came, a miniature sedan chair in silver and painted silk. "The public?" he said. "I've never been able to find out what that was. Just about the time I decided it was a trained sheep it turned out to be a cyclone. You think it's intelligent, and it plays the fool: you decide it's a fool, and it turns out to know more than you do. You make love to it, and it may sidle up and kiss you—or give you a good, hard kick!"

"But if we make this a *good* play——"

"It won't be a play at all," said Tinker, "unless the public thinks it's a good one. A play isn't something you read; it's something actors do on a

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stage; and they can't afford to do it unless the public pays to watch 'em. If it won't buy tickets, you haven't got a play; you've only got some typewriting."

Canby glanced involuntarily at the blue-covered manuscript he had placed upon a table beside him. It had a guilty look.

"I get confused," he said. "If the public's so flighty, why does it take so much stock in what these wolves print about a play?"

"Print. That's it," old Tinker answered serenely. "Write your opinion in a letter or say it with your mouth, and it doesn't amount to anything. Print's different. You see some nonsense about yourself in a newspaper, and you think I'm an idiot for believing it. But you read nonsense about me, and you believe it. You don't stop and think: 'That's a lie; he isn't that sort of a man.' No. You just wonder why I'm such a darn fool."

"Then these cannibals have got us where——"

"Dotage!" Talbot Potter broke in, halting under the chandelier. "Tinker's reached his dotage!" He levelled a denouncing forefinger at the manager. "Do you mean to tell me that if I decide to go on with Mr. Canby's play any critic or combination or

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cabal of critics can keep it from being a success? Then I tell you, you're in your dotage! For one point, if I play this part they're going to say it's a big thing: I don't mean the play, of course, because you must know, yourself, Mr. Canby, we could bribe them into calling it a strong play. We know it isn't, and they'll know it isn't. What I mean is the characterization of 'Roderick Hanscom.' I tell you, if I do it they're going to call it a big thing. They aren't all maniacs about everything made in France, thank heaven! Rostand! Ass! I'm not playing parts with a clothespin on the end of my nose!" And again he mimicked the departed visitor: "'*This for my stirrup-cup: you cable Rostand to-morrow.*' My soul! Does he think I want to play POULTRY!"

Sulphurously, he resumed his pacing of the floor.

Old Tinker seemed unaffected by the outburst, but for that matter he seemed unaffected by anything. His dead gaze followed his employer's to-and-fro striding as a cat's follows a pendulum, but without the cat's curiosity about a pendulum. He never interrupted when Potter was speaking; and Canby noticed that whenever Potter talked at any length, Tinker looked thoughtful and distant, like a mechanic so accustomed to the whirr and thunder

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of the machine-shop that he may indulge in reveries there. After a moment or two the old fellow ceased to follow the pendulum stride, and turned to the playwright.

"I'll tell you the two surest ways to make what you call the public like a play, Mr. Canby," he said. "Nothing is sure, but these are the nearest to it. Make 'em laugh. I mean, make 'em laugh after they get home, or the next day in the office, any time they get to thinking about it. The other way is to get two actors for your lovers that the audience, young and old, can't help falling in love with; a young actor that the females in the audience think they'd like to marry, and a young actress that the males all think they'd like to marry. It doesn't matter much about the writing; just have something interfere between them from eight-fifteen until along about twenty-five minutes after ten. The two lovers don't necessarily have to know much about acting, either, though of course it's better if they happen to. The best stage-lover I ever knew, and the one that played in the most successes, *did* happen to understand acting thor——"

"Who was that?" Potter interrupted fiercely. "Mounet-Sully?"

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"No. I meant Dora Preston."

"Never heard of her!"

"No," said the old man. "You wouldn't. They don't put up monuments to pretty actresses, nor write about them in school histories. She dropped dead in her dressing-room one night forty-two years ago. I was thinking of her to-day: something reminded me of her."

"Was she a friend of yours, Mr. Tinker?" Canby asked.

"Friend? No. I was an usher in the old Calumet Theatre, and she owned New York. She had this quality: every man in the audience fell in love with her. So did the women, too, for that matter, and the actors who played with her. When she played a love-scene, people who'd been married thirty years would sit and watch her and hold each other's hands—yes, with tears in their eyes. I've seen 'em. And after the performance one night, the stage-door keeper, a man seventy years old, was caught kissing the latch of the door where she'd touched it; and he was sober, too. There was something about her looks and something about her voice you couldn't get away from. You couldn't tell to save you what it was, but after you'd seen her she'd seem to be

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with you for days, and you couldn't think much about anything else, even if you wanted to. People used to go around in a kind of spell; they couldn't think of anything or talk of anything but Dora Preston. It didn't matter much what she did: *everything* she did made you feel like a boy falling in love the first time. It made you think of apple-blossoms and moonlight just to look at her. She——"

"See here, Mr. Canby," Talbot Potter interrupted suddenly. He dropped into a chair and picked up the manuscript. "See here! I've got an idea that may save this play. Suppose we let 'Roderick Hanscom' make his sacrifice, not for the heroine, but because he's in love with the other girl—the ingénue—I've forgotten the name you call her in the script. I mean the part played by that little Miss Miss girl—Miss-what's-her-name—Wanda Malone!"

Canby stared at Potter in fascinated amazement, his straining eyes showing the whites above and below the pupils. It was the look of a man struck dumb by a sudden marvel of telepathy.

"Why, yes," he said slowly, when he had recovered his breath. "I believe that *would* be a good idea!"

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CHAPTER VII

FOR two hours, responding to the manipulation of the star and his thoroughly subjugated playwright, the character of "Roderick Hanscom" grew nobler and nobler, speech by speech and deed by deed, while the expression of the gentleman who was to impersonate it became, in precise parallel with this regeneration, sweeter and loftier and lovelier.

"A little Biblical quotation wouldn't go so bad right in there," he said, when they had finally established the Great Sacrifice for a Woman. "We'll let Roderick have a line like: 'Greater love hath no man than laying down his life to save another's.'" He touched a page of the manuscript with his finger. "There's a good place for it."

"Aren't you afraid it would sound a little—smug?" Canby asked timidly. "The way we've got him now, Roderick seems to me to be always seeing himself as a splendid man and sort of pointing it out to the——"

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"Good gracious!" cried Potter, astounded. "Hasn't it got to be pointed out? The audience hasn't got a whole lifetime to study him in; it's only got about two hours. Besides, I don't see what you say; I don't see it at all! It seems to me I've worked him around into being a perfectly natural character."

"I suppose you're right," said Canby, meekly scribbling.

"Biblical quotations never do any harm to the box-office," Potter added. "You may not get a hand on 'em, but you'll never get a cough, either." He looked dreamily at the ceiling. "I've often thought of doing a Biblical play. I'd have it built around the character of St. Paul. That's one they haven't touched yet, and it's new. I wouldn't do it with a beard and long hair. I wouldn't use much make-up. No. Just the face as it is."

"You can do practically anything with a religious show," said Tinker. "That's been proved. You can run in gambling and horse-racing and ballys, and you'll get people into the house, night after night, that think the theatre's wicked and wouldn't go to see 'Rip Van Winkle.' They do a lot of good, too—religious shows—just that way."

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"I think I'd play it in armour," Potter continued his thought, still gazing at the ceiling. "I believe it would be a big thing."

"It might if it was touted right," said Tinker. "It all depends on the touting. If you get it touted to the tank towns that you've got a play with the great religious gonzabo, then your show's a big property. Same if you get it touted for a great educational gonzabo. Or 'artistic.' Get it touted right for 'artistic,' and the tanks'll think they like it, even if they don't. Look at 'Cyrano'—they liked Mansfield and his acting, but they didn't like the show. They *said* they liked the show, and thought they did, but they didn't. If they'd liked it as much as they said they did, that show would be running like 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' Speaking of that"—he paused, coughed, and went on—"I'm glad you've got the ingénue's part straightened out in this piece. I thought from the first it would stand a little lengthening."

Potter, unheeding, dreamily proceeded: "In silver armour. Might silver the hair a little—not too much. Play it as a spiritual character, but not solemn. Wouldn't make it turgid: keep it light. Have the whole play spiritual but light. For in-

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stance, have room in it for a religious ingénue part—make her a younger sister of Mary Magdalen, say, with St. Paul becoming converted for her sake after he'd been a Roman General. I believe it's a big idea."

Canby was growing nervous. All this seemed to be rambling farther and farther from "Roderick Hanscom." Potter relieved his anxiety, however, after a thoughtful sigh, by saying abruptly: "Well, well, we can't go into a big production like that, this late in the year. We'll have to see what can be done with 'Roderick Hanscom.'" He looked at the door, where the Japanese was performing a shrinking curtsey. "What is it, Sato?"

"Miss Pata."

"Who?"

"Miss Pata."

A voice called from the hallway: "It's me, Mr. Potter. Packer."

"Oh, come in! Come in!"

The stage-manager made a deferential entrance. "It's about Miss——"

"Sit down, Packer."

"Thank you, Mr. Potter." Evidently considering the command a favour, Packer sat. "I saw Miss Lyston, sir——"

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"I won't turn her adrift," said his employer peevishly. "You see, Mr. Canby, here's another of the difficulties of my position. Miss Lyston had been with me for several years, and for this piece we've got somebody I think will play her part better, but I haven't any other part for Miss Lyston. And we start so late in the season, this year, she'll probably not be able to get anything else to do; so she's on my hands. I can't turn people out in the snow like that. Some managers can, but *I* can't. And yet I have letters begging me for all kinds of charities every day. They don't know what my company costs me in money like this—absolutely thrown away so far as any benefit to me is concerned. And often I find I've been taken advantage of, too. I shouldn't be at all surprised to find that Miss Lyston has comfortable investments right now, and that she's only scheming to—— Packer, don't you know whether she's been saving her salary or not? If you don't you ought to."

"I came to tell you, sir. I thought you might be relieved to know. We don't have to bother about her, Mr. Potter. I've been to see her at her flat, this evening, and she's as anxious to get away from us, Mr. Potter, as we are to——"

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The star rose to his feet, his face suffusing. "You sit there," he exclaimed, "and tell me that a member of my company finds the association so distasteful that she wants to get away!"

"Oh, *no*, Mr. Potter!" the stage-manager protested. "Not that at all! She's very sorry to go. She asked me to tell you that she felt she was giving up a great honour, and to thank you for all your kindness to her."

"Go on!" Potter sternly bade him. "Why does she wish to leave my company?"

"Why, it seems she's very much in love with her husband, sir, Vorly Surbilt——"

"It doesn't seem possible," said Potter, shaking his head. "I know him, and it sounds like something you're making up as you go along, Packer."

"Indeed, I'm not, Mr. Potter!" the stage-manager cried, in simple distress. "I wouldn't know how."

"Go on!"

"Well, sir, it seems Vorly Surbilt was to go out with Mrs. Romaley, and it seems that when Miss Lyston left rehearsal she drove around till she found him——"

"Ah! I knew she was fooling me! I knew she

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wasn't sick! Went to drive with her husband, and *I* pay the cab bill!"

"No, no, sir! I forgot to tell you: she wouldn't let me pay it. She took him home and put him to bed—and from what I heard on Broadway it was time somebody did! It seems they'd had an offer to go into a vaudeville piece together, and after she got him to bed she telephoned the vaudeville man, and had him bring up a contract, and they signed it, though she had to guide Vorly's hand for him. Anyway, he's signed up all right, and so is she. That's why she was so anxious about fixing it up with us. I told her it would be all right."

Potter relapsed into his chair in an attitude of gloom. "So they've begun to leave Talbot Potter's company!" he said, nodding his head with bitter melancholy. "For vaudeville! I'd better go to farming at once; I often think of it. What sort of an act is it that Miss Lyston prefers to remaining with me? Acrobatic?"

"It's a little play," said Packer. "It's from the *Grand Guignol*."

"French!" Potter took this simply as an added insult on the part of Miss Lyston. "French!"

"They say it's a wonderful little thing," said

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Packer innocently, but it was as if he had run a needle into his sensitive employer. Potter instantly sprang up again with a cry of pain.

"Of *course* it's wonderful! It's French: everything French is wonderful, magnificent. Supreme! Everything French is HOLY! Good God, Packer! *You'll* be telling me what my 'technique' ought to be, next!"

He hurled himself again into the chair and moaned, then in a dismal voice inquired: "Miss Lyston struck you as feeling that her condition in life was distinctly improved by this ascent into vaudeville, didn't she?"

"Oh, not at all, Mr. Potter! But, of course," Packer explained deprecatingly, "she's pleased to have Vorly where she can keep an eye on him. She said that though she was all broken up about leaving the company, she expected to be very happy in looking after him. You see, sir, it's the first time in all their married life they've had a chance to be together except one summer when neither of 'em could get a stock engagement."

Potter made no reply but to shake his head despondently, and Packer sat silent in deference, as if waiting to be questioned further. It was the

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playwright who presently filled the void. "Why haven't Mr. and Mrs. Surbilt gone into the same companies, if they care to be together? I should think they'd have made it a point to get engagements in the same ones."

Packer looked disturbed. "It's not done much," he said.

"Besides, Vorly Surbilt plays leading parts with women stars," old Tinker volunteered. "You see, naturally, it wouldn't do at all."

"Jealousy, you mean?"

"Not necessarily the kind you're thinking of. But it just doesn't do."

"Some managers will allow married couples in their companies," Potter said, adding emphatically: "I won't! I never have and I never will! Never! There's just one thing every soul in my support has got to keep working for, and that is a high-tension performance every night in the year. If married people are in love with each other, they're going to think more about that than about the fact that they're working for me. If they aren't in love with each other, there's the devil to pay. I'd let the best man or woman in the profession go—and they could go to vaudeville, for all I cared!—

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if I had to keep their wives or husbands travelling with us. I won't have 'em! My soul! *I* don't marry, do I?"

Packer rose. "Is there anything else for me, Mr. Potter?"

"Yes. Take this interlined script; get some copies typewritten, and see that the company's sides are changed to suit it. Be especially careful about that young Miss—ah—Miss Malone's. You'll find her part is altered considerably, and will be even more, when Mr. Canby gets the dialogue for other changes finished. He'll let you have them to-morrow. By the way, Packer, where did you find——" He paused, stretched out his hand to the miniature sedan chair of liqueurs, took a decanter and tiny glass therefrom, and carefully poured himself a sparkling emerald of *crème de menthe.* "Will you have something, Mr. Canby?" he asked. "You, Tinker?"

Both declined in silence: they seemed preoccupied.

"Where did I what, Mr. Potter?" asked the stage-manager, reminding him of the question left unfinished.

"What?"

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"You said: 'By the way, where did you find——'"

"Oh, yes." Potter smiled negligently. "Where did you find that little Miss Malone? At the agent's?"

Packer echoed him: "Where did I find her?" He scratched his head. "Miss"—he said ruminatively, repeating the word slowly, like a man trying to work out the solution of a puzzle—"Miss——"

"Miss Malone. I suppose you got her at an agent's?"

"Let's see," said Packer. "At an agent's? No, No, it wasn't. Come to think of it, it wasn't."

"Then where did you get her?" Tinker inquired.

"That's what I just asked him," Potter said, placing his glass upon a table without having tasted the liqueur. "What's the matter, Packer? Gone to sleep?"

"I remember now," said Packer, laughing deferentially. "Of course! No. It wasn't through any of the agents. Now I remember—come to think of it—I sort of ran across her myself, as a matter of fact. I wasn't just sure who you meant at first. You mean the understudy, the one that's to play

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Miss Lyston's part, that Miss—Miss——" He snapped a finger and thumb to spur memory and then, as in triumphant solution of his puzzle, cried, "Ma-Malone! Miss Malone!"

"Yes," said Potter, looking upon him darkly. "*Where* did you sort of run across her, come to think of it, as a matter of fact?"

"Oh, I remember all about it now," said Packer brightly. "Why, she was playing last summer in stock out at Seeleyville, Pennsylvania. That's only about six miles from Packer's Ridge, where my father lives. I spent a couple of weeks with him, and we trolleyed over one evening to see 'The Little Minister,' because father got it in his head some way that it was about the Baptists, and I couldn't talk him out of it. It wasn't as bad a performance as you'd think, and this little girl was a pretty fair 'Babbie.' Father forgot all about the Baptists and kept talking about her after we got home, until nothing would do but we must go over and see that show again. He wanted to take her right out to the farm and adopt her—or something: he's a widower, and all alone out there. Fact is, I had all I could do to keep him from going around to ask her, and I was pretty near afraid he'd speak to her

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from the audience. Well, to satisfy *him*, I did go around after the show, and gave her my card, and told her if I could do anything for her in New York to let me know. Of course, naturally, when I got back to town I forgot all about it, but I got a note from her that she was here, looking for an engagement, the very day you told me to scare up an understudy. So I thought she might do as well as anybody I'd get at the agent's, and I let her have it." He drew a breath of relief, like that of a witness leaving the stand, and with another placative laugh, letting his eyes fall humbly under the steady scrutiny of his master, he concluded: "Of course I remember all about it, only at first I wasn't sure which one you meant: it's such a large company."

"I see," said Potter grimly. "You engaged her to please your father."

"Oh, Mr. Potter!" the stage-manager protested. "If you don't like her——"

"That will do!" Potter cut him off, and paced the floor, virulently brooding. "And so Talbot Potter's company is to be made up of actors engaged to suit the personal whims of L. Smith Packer's father, old Mister Packer of Baptist Ridge, near Seeleyville, Pennsylvania!"

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"But, Mr. Potter, if you don't——"

"I said that would DO!" roared Potter. "Good-night!"

"Good-night, sir," said the stage-manager humbly, and humbly got himself out of the room, to be heard, an instant later, bidding the Japanese an apologetic good-night at the outer door of the apartment.

Canby rose to take his own departure, promising to have the new dialogue "worked out" by morning.

"He *is*, too!" said Potter, not heeding the playwright, but confirming an unuttered thought in his own mind. He halted at the table, where he had set his tiny glass, and gulped the emerald at a swallow. "I always thought he was!"

"Was what?" inquired old Tinker.

"A hypocrite!"

"D'you mean Packer?" said Tinker incredulously.

"He's a hypocrite!" Potter shouted fiercely. "And I shouldn't be surprised if his father was another! Widower! I never saw the man in my life, but I'd swear it on oath! He *is* a hypocrite! Packer's father is a damned old Baptist hypocrite!"

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CHAPTER VIII

WITH this sonorous bit of character reading still ringing in his ears, Canby emerged from the cream-coloured apartment to find the stoop-shouldered figure of the also hypocritical son leaning wearily against the wall, waiting for a delaying elevator. The attitude was not wholly devoid of pathos, to Canby's view of it. Neither was the careworn, harried face, unharmoniously topped by a green hat, so sparklingly jaunty, not only in colour but in its shape and the angle of its perch, that it was outright hilarious, and, above the face of Packer, made the playwright think pityingly of a St. Patrick's Day party holding a noisy celebration upon a hearse.

Its wearer nodded solemnly as the elevator bounced up, flashing, and settled to the level of the floor; but the quick drop through the long shaft seemed to do the stage-manager a disproportionate amount of good. Halfway down he emitted a heavy "Whew!" of relief and threw back his shoulders. He seemed

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to swell, to grow larger: lines verged into the texture of his face, disappearing; and with them went care and seeming years. Canby had casually taken him to be about forty, but so radical was the transformation of him that, as the distance from his harrowing overlord increased, the playwright beheld another kind of creature. In place of the placative middle-aged varlet, troubled and hurrying to serve, there stepped out of the elevator, at the street level, a deep-chested, assertive, manly adventurer, under thirty, kindly eyed, picturesque, and careless. The green hat belonged to him perfectly.

He gave Canby a look of burlesque ruefulness over his shoulder, the comedy appeal of one schoolboy to another as they leave a scolding teacher on the far side of the door. "The governor does keep himself worked up!" he laughed, as they reached the street and paused. "If it isn't one thing, it's some thing!"

"Perhaps it's my play just now," said Canby. "I was afraid, earlier this evening, he meant to drop it. Making so many changes may have upset his nerves."

"Lord bless your soul! No!" exclaimed the new Packer. "*His* nerves are all right! *He's* always the same! *He* can't help it!"

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"I thought possibly he might have been more upset than usual," Canby said. "There was a critic or something that——"

"No, no, Mr. Canby!" Packer chuckled. "New plays and critics, *they* don't worry him any more than anything else. Of course he isn't going to be pleased with any critics. Most of them give him splendid notices, but they don't please him. How could they?"

"He's always the same, you think?" Canby said blankly.

"Always—always at top pitch, that is, and always unexpected. You'll see as you get to know him. You won't know him any better than you do now, Mr. Canby; you'll only know him more. I've been with him for four years—stage-manager—hired man—maid of all work—orders his meals for him in hotels—and I guess old Tinker and I know him as well as anybody does, but it's a mighty big job to handle him just right. It keeps us hopping, but that's bread and butter. Not much bread and butter anywhere these days unless you do hop! We all have to hop for *somebody!*" He chuckled again, and then unexpectedly became so serious that he was almost truculent. "And I tell you, Mr. Canby,"

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he cried, "by George! I'd sooner hop for Talbot Potter than for any other man that ever walked the earth!"

He took a yellow walking-stick from under his arm, thrust the manuscript Potter had given him into the pocket of his light overcoat, and bade his companion good-night with a genial flourish of the stick. "Subway to Brooklyn for mine. Your play will go, all right; don't worry about that, Mr. Canby. Good-night and good luck, Mr. Canby!"

Canby went the other way, marvelling.

It was eleven; and for half an hour the theatres had been releasing their audiences to the streets—the sidewalks were bobbing and fluttering; automobiles cometed by bleating peevishly. Suddenly, through the window of a limousine, brilliantly lighted within, Canby saw the face of Wanda Malone, laughing, and embowered in white furs. He stopped, startled: then he realized that Wanda Malone's hair was not red. The girl in the limousine had red hair, and was altogether unlike Wanda Malone in feature and expression.

He walked on angrily.

Immediately a slender girl, prettily dressed,

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passed him. She clung charmingly to the arm of a big boy; and to Canby's first glance she was Wanda Malone. Wrenching his eyes from her, he saw Wanda Malone across the street getting into a taxicab, and then he stumbled out of the way of a Wanda Malone who almost walked into him. Wherever there was a graceful gesture or turn of the head, there was Wanda Malone.

He wheeled, and walked back toward Broadway, and thought he caught a glimpse of Packer going into a crowded drug-store near the corner. The man he took to be Packer lifted his hat and spoke to a girl who was sitting at a table and drinking soda-water, but when she looked up and seemed to be Wanda Malone with a blue veil down to her nose, Canby turned on his heel, face-about, and headed violently for home.

When he reached quieter streets his gait slackened, and he walked slowly, lost in deep reverie. By and by he came to a halt, and stood still for several minutes without knowing it. Slowly he came out of the trance, wondering where he was. Then he realized that his staring eyes had halted him automatically; and as they finally conveyed their information to his conscious mind, he perceived that

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he was standing directly in front of a saloon, and glaring at the sign upon the window:

ALES WINES LIQUORS AND CIGARS
TIM MALONE

At that, somewhere in his inside, he cried out, in a kind of anguish: "Isn't there anything—anywhere—any more—except Wanda Malone!"

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CHAPTER IX

"SECOND act, ladies and gentlemen!" cried Packer, at precisely ten o'clock the next morning

About a dozen actors were chatting in small groups upon the stage; three or four paced singly, muttering and mildly gesticulating, with the fretful preoccupation of people trying to remember; two or three, seated, bent over their typewritten "sides," studying intently; and a few, invisible from the auditorium, were scattered about the rearward rooms and passageways. Talbot Potter, himself, was nowhere to be seen, and, what was even more important to one tumultuously beating heart "in front," neither was Wanda Malone. Mr. Stewart Canby in a silvery new suit, wearing a white border to his waistcoat collar and other decorations proper to a new playwright, sat in the centre of the front row of the orchestra. Yesterday he had taken a seat about nine rows back.

He bore no surface signs of the wear and tear of

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a witches' night: riding his runaway play and fighting the enchantment that was upon him. Elastic twenty-seven does not mark a bedless session with violet arcs below its eyes—what violet a witch had used upon Stewart Canby this morning appeared as a dewy boutonniére in the lapel of his new coat: he was that far gone.

Miss Ellsling and a youth of the company took their places near the front of the stage and began the rehearsal of the second act with a dialogue which led up to the entrance of the star with the "ingénue," both of whom still remained out of the playwright's range of vision.

As the moment for their appearance drew near, Canby became, to his own rage, almost uncontrollably agitated. Miss Ellsling's scene, which he should have followed carefully, meant nothing to him but a ticking off of the seconds before he should behold with his physical eyes the living presence of what had put a spell upon him. He was trembling.

Packer went to the back of the stage, leaned through an open doorway, and spoke deferentially:

"Mr. Potter? All ready, sir. All ready, Miss—ah—Malone?"

Then he stepped back with the air of an unim-

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portant person making way for his betters to pass before him, while Canby's eyes fixed themselves glassily upon the shabby old doorway through which an actual, breathing Wanda Malone was to come.

But he was destined not to see her appear in that expectant frame. Twenty years before—though he had forgotten it—in a dazzling room where there was a Christmas tree, he had uttered a shriek of ecstatic timidity just as a jingling Santa Claus began to emerge from behind the tree, and he had run out of the room and out of the house. He did exactly the same thing now, though this time the shriek was not vocal.

Suffocating, he fled up the aisle and into the lobby. There he addressed himself distractedly but plainly:

"Jackass!"

Breathing heavily, he went out to the wide front steps of the theatre and stood, sunlit Broadway swimming before him.

"Hello, Canby!"

A shabby, shaggy, pale young man, with hot eyes, checked his ardent gait and paused, extending a cordial, thin hand, the fingers browned at the sides by cigarettes smoked to the bitter end. "Rieger,"

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he said. "Arnold Rieger. Remember me at the old Ink Club meetings before we broke up?"

"Yes," said Canby dimly. "Yes. The old Ink Club. I came out for a breath of air. Just a breath."

"We used to settle the universe in that little back restaurant room," said Rieger. "Not one of us had ever got a thing into print—and me, I haven't yet, for that matter. Editors still hate my stuff. I've kept my oath, though: I've never compromised—never for a moment."

"Yes," Canby responded feebly, wondering what the man was talking about. Wanda Malone was surely on the stage, now. If he turned, walked about thirty feet, and opened a door, he would see her—hear her speaking!

"I've had news of your success," said Rieger. "I saw in the paper that Talbot Potter was to put on a play you'd written. I congratulate you. That man's a great artist, but he never seems to get a good play; he's always much, much greater than his part. I'm sure you've given him a real play at last. I remember your principles: Realism; no compromise! The truth; no shirking it, no tampering with it! You've struck out for that—you've never compro——"

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"No. Oh, no," said Canby, waking up a little. "Of course you've got to make a little change or two in plays. You see, you've got to make an actor like a play or he won't play it and if he won't play it you haven't got any play—you've only got some typewriting."

Rieger set his foot upon the step and rested his left forearm upon his knee, an attitude comfortable for street debate. "Admitting the truth of that for the sake of argument, and only for the moment, because I don't for one instant accept such a jesuitism——"

"Yes," said Canby dreamily. "Yes." And, with not only apparent but genuine unconsciousness of this one-time friend's existence, he turned and walked back into the lobby, and presently was vaguely aware that somebody near the street doors of the theatre seemed to be in a temper. Somebody shouted "Swell-headed pup!" and "Go to the devil!" at somebody else repeatedly, but finally went away, after reaching a vociferous climax of even harsher epithets and instructions.

The departure of this raging unknown left the lobby quiet: Canby had gone near to the inner doors. Listening fearfully, he heard through these a murmurous baritone cadencing: Talbot Potter

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declaiming the inwardness of "Roderick Hanscom," and then—oh, bells of Elfland faintly chiming!—the voice of Wanda Malone!

He pressed, trembling, against the doors, and went in.

Talbot Potter and Wanda Malone stood together, the two alone in the great hollow space of the stage. The actors of the company, silent and remote, watched them; old Tinker, halfway down an aisle, stood listening; and near the proscenium two workmen, tools in their hands, had paused in attitudes of arrested motion. Save for the voices of the two players, the whole vast cavern of the theatre was as still as the very self of silence. And the stirless air that filled it was charged with necromancy.

Rehearsal is like the painted canvas without a frame; it is more like a plaster cast, most like of all to the sculptor's hollow moulds. It needs the bronze to bring a statue to life, and it needs the audience to bring a play to life. Some glamour must come from one to the other; some wind of enchantment must blow between them—there must be a magic spell. But these two actors had produced the spell without the audience.

And yet they were only reading a wistful little

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love-scene that Stewart Canby had written the night before.

Two people were falling in love with each other, neither realizing it. And these two who played the lovers had found some hidden rhythm that brought them together in one picture as a chord is one sound. They played to each other and with each other instinctively: Talbot Potter had forgotten "the smile" and all the mechanism that went with it. The two held the little breathless silences of lovers; they broke these silences timidly, and then their movements and voices ran together like waters in a fountain. A radiance was about them as it is about all lovers; they were suffused with it.

To Stewart Canby, watching, they seemed to move within a sorcerer's circle of enchantment. Upon his disturbed mind there was dawning a conviction that these inspired mummers were beings apart from him, knowing things he never could know, feeling things he never could feel, belonging to another planet whither he could never voyage, where strange winds blew and all things lived and grew in a light beyond his understanding. For the light that shone in the faces of these two was "the light that never was, on sea or land."

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It had its blessing for him. From that moment, if he had known it, this play, which was being born of so many parents, was certain of "success," of "popularity," and of what quality of renown such things may bring. And he who was to be called its author stood there a Made Man, unless some accident befell.

Miss Ellsling spoke and came forward, another actor with her. The scene was over. There was a clearing of throats; everybody moved. The stage-carpenter and his assistant went away like men roused from deep sleep. The routine of rehearsal resumed its place; and old Tinker, who had not stirred a muscle, rubbed the back of his neck, suddenly, and came up the aisle to Canby.

"Good business!" he said. "Did you see that little run off the stage she made when Miss Ellsling came on? And you saw what he can do when he wants to!"

"He?" Canby echoed. "He?"

"Played for the scene instead of himself. Oh, he can do it! He's an old hand—got too many tricks in the bag to let her get the piece away from him—but he's found a girl that can play with him at last, and he'll use every value she's got. He

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knows good property when he sees it. She's got a pretty good box of tricks herself: stock's the way to learn 'em, but it's apt to take the bloom off. It hasn't taken off any of hers, the darlin'! What do you think, Mr. Canby?"

To Canby, who hardly noticed that this dead old man had come to life, the speech was jargon. The playwright was preoccupied with the fact that Talbot Potter was still on the stage, would continue there until the rather distant end of the act, and that the "ingénue," after completing the little run at her exit, had begun to study the manuscript of her part, and in that absorption had disappeared through a door into the rear passageway. Canby knew that she was not to be "on" again until the next act, and he followed a desperate impulse.

"See a person," he mumbled, and went out through the lobby, turned south to the cross-street, proceeded thereby to the stage-door of the theatre, and resolutely crossed the path of the distrustful man who lounged there.

"*Here!*" called the distrustful man.

"I'm with the show," said Canby, an expression foreign to his lips and a clear case of inspiration. The distrustful man waved him on.

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Wanda Malone was leaning against the wall at the other end of the passageway, studying her manuscript. She did not look up until he paused beside her.

"Miss Malone," he began. "I have come—I have come—I have—ah——"

These were his first words to her. She did nothing more than look at him inquiringly, but with such radiance that he floundered to a stop. There were only two things within his power to do: he had either to cough or to speak much too sweetly.

"There's a draught here," she said, Christian anxiety roused by the paroxysm which rescued him from the damning alternative. "You oughtn't to stand here perhaps, Mr. Canby."

"'Canby?'" he repeated inquiringly, the name seeming new to him. "Canby?"

"You're Mr. Canby, aren't you?"

"I meant where—who——" he stammered. "How did *you* know?"

"The stage-manager pointed you out to me yesterday at rehearsal. I was *so* excited! You're the first author I ever saw, you see. I've been in stock where we don't see authors."

"Do you—like it?" he said. "I mean stock. Do

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you like stock? What does it mean—stock? I ah——" Again he fell back upon the faithful old device of nervous people since the world began.

"I'm sure you oughtn't to stand in this passage-way," she urged.

"No, no!" he said hurriedly. "I love it! I love it! I haven't any cold. It's the air. That's what does it." He nodded brightly, with the expression of a man who knows the answer to everything. "It's bad for me."

"Then you——"

"No," he said, and went back to the beginning. "I have come—I wanted to come—I wished to say that I wi——" He put forth a manful effort which made him master of the speech he had planned. "I want to thank you for the way you play your part. What I wrote seemed dry stuff, but when you act it, why, then it seems to be—beautiful!"

"Oh! Do you think so?" she cried, her eyes bedewing ineffably. "Do *you* think so?"

"Oh—I, oh!——" He got no further, and, although a stranger to the context of this conversation might have supposed him to be speaking of a celebrated commonwealth, Mother of Presidents, his meaning was sufficiently clear to Wanda Malone.

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"You're lovely to me," she said, wiping her eyes. "Lovely! I'll never forget it! I'll never forget anything that's happened to me all this beautiful, beautiful week!"

The little kerchief which she had lifted to her eyes was wet with tears not of the stage. "It seems foolish," she said bravely. "It's because I'm so happy! Everything has come all at once, this week. I'd never been in New York before in my life. Doesn't that seem funny for a girl that's been on the stage ever since she left school? And now I *am* here, all at once I get this beautiful part you've written, and you tell me you like it—and Mr. Potter says *he* likes it. Oh! Mr. Potter's just beautiful to me! Don't you think Mr. Potter's *wonderful*, Mr. Canby?"

The truth about Mr. Canby's opinion of Mr. Potter at this moment was not to the playwright's credit. However, he went only so far as to say: "I didn't like him much yesterday afternoon."

"Oh, no, no!" she said quickly. "That was every bit my fault. I was frightened and it made me stupid. And he's just beautiful to me to-day. But I'd never mind *anything* from a man that works with you as he does. It's the most wonderful

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thing! To a woman who loves her profession for its own sake——"

"You do, Miss Malone?"

"Love it?" she cried. "Is there anything like it in the world?"

"I might have known you felt that, from your acting," he said, managing somehow to be coherent, though it was difficult.

"Oh, but we all do!" she protested eagerly. "I believe all actors love it more than they love life itself. Don't think I mean those that never grew up out of their 'show-off' time in childhood. Those don't count, in what I mean, any more than the 'show-girls' and heaven knows what not that the newspapers call 'actresses.' Oh, Mr. Canby, I mean the people with the art and the fire born in them: those who *must* come to the stage and who ought to and who do. It isn't because we want to be '*looked at*' that we go on the stage and starve to stay there! It's because we want to make pictures —to make pictures of characters in plays for people in audiences. It's like being a sculptor or painter; only we paint and model with *ourselves*—and we're different from sculptors and painters because they do their work in quiet studios, while we do ours

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under the tension of great crowds watching every stroke we make—and, oh, the exhilaration when they show us we make the *right* stroke!"

"Bravo!" he said. "Bravo!"

"Isn't it the greatest of all the arts? *Isn't* it?" she went on with the same glowing eagerness. "We feed our nerves to it, and our lives to it, and are glad! It makes us different from other people. But what of that? Don't we give ourselves? Don't we live and die just to make these pictures for the world? Oughtn't the world to be thankful for us? Oughtn't it? Oh, it *is*, Mr. Canby; it *is* thankful for us; and I, for one, never forget that a Prime Minister of England was *proud* to warm Davy Garrick's breeches at the grate for him!"

She clapped her hands together in a gesture of such spirit and fire that Canby could have thrown his hat in the air and cheered, she had lifted him so clear of his timidity.

"Bravo!" he cried again. "Bravo!"

At that she blushed. "What a little goose I am!" she cried. "Playing the orator! Mr. Canby, you mustn't mind——"

"I won't!"

"It's because I'm so happy," she explained—to

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his way of thinking, divinely. "I'm so happy I just pour out everything. I want to sing every minute. You see, it seemed such a long while that I was waiting for my chance. Some of us wait forever, Mr. Canby, and I was so afraid mine might never come. It it hadn't come now it *might* never have come. If I'd missed this one, I might never have had another. It frightens me to think of it—and I oughtn't to be thinking of it! I ought to be spending all my time on my knees thanking God that old Mr. Packer got it into his head that 'The Little Minister' was a play about the Baptists!"

"I don't see——"

"If he hadn't," she said, "I wouldn't be *here!*"

"God bless old Mr. Packer!"

"I hope you mean it, Mr. Canby." She blushed again, because there was no possible doubt that he meant it. "It seems a miracle to me that I am here, and that my chance is here with me, at last. It's twice as good a chance as it was yesterday, thanks to you. You've given me such beautiful new things to do and such beautiful new things to say. How I'll work at it! After rehearsal this afternoon I'll learn every word of it in the tunnel before I get to my station in Brooklyn. That's funny, too, isn't it:

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the first time I've ever been to New York I go and board over in Brooklyn! But it's a beautiful place to study, and by the time I get home I'll know the lines and have all the rest of the time for the real *work:* trying to make myself into a faraway picture of the adorable girl you had in your mind when you wrote it. You see——"

She checked herself again. "Oh! Oh!" she said, half-laughing, half-ashamed. "I've never talked so much in my life! You see it seems to me that the whole world has just burst into bloom!"

She radiated a happiness that was almost tangible; it was a glow so real it seemed to warm and light that dingy old passageway. Certainly it warmed and lighted the young man who stood there with her. For him, too, the whole world was transfigured, and life just an orchard to walk through in perpetual April morning.

The voice of Packer proclaimed: "Two o'clock, ladies and gentlemen! Rehearsal two o'clock this afternoon!"

The next moment he looked into the passageway. "This afternoon's rehearsal, two o'clock, Miss—ah—Malone. Oh, Mr. Canby, Mr. Potter wants you to go to lunch with him and Mr. Tinker. He's waiting. This way, Mr. Canby."

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"In a moment," said the young playwright. "Miss Malone, you spoke of your going home to work at making yourself into the 'adorable girl' I had in my mind when I wrote your part. It oughtn't"—he faltered, growing red—"it oughtn't to take much—much work!"

And, breathless, he followed the genially waiting Packer.

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CHAPTER X

"YOUR overcoat, Mr. Potter!" called that faithful servitor, as Potter was going out through the theatre with old Tinker and Canby. "You've forgotten your overcoat, sir."

"I don't want it."

"Yes, sir; but it's a little raw to-day." He leaped down into the orchestra from the high stage, striking his knee upon a chair with violence, but, pausing not an instant for that, came running up the aisle carrying the overcoat. "You might want it after you get out into the air, Mr. Potter. I'm sure Mr. Tinker or Mr. Canby won't mind taking charge of it for you until you feel like putting it on."

"Lord! Don't make such a fuss, Packer. Put it on—put it on!"

He extended his arms behind him, and was enveloped solicitously and reverently in the garment.

"Confound him!" said Potter good-humouredly,

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as they came out into the lobby. "It is chilly. He's usually right, the idiot!"

Turning from Broadway, at the corner, they went over to Fifth Avenue, where Potter's unconsciousness of the people who recognized him and stared at him was, as usual, one of the finest things he did, either upon the stage or "off." Superb performance as it was, it went for nothing with Stewart Canby, who did not even see it, for he walked entranced, not in a town, but through orchards in bloom.

If Wanda Malone had remained with him, clear and insistent after yesterday's impersonal vision of her at rehearsal, what was she now, when every tremulous lilt of the zither-string voice, and every little gesture of the impulsive hands, and every eager change of the glowing face, were fresh and living, in all their beautiful reality, but a matter of minutes past? He no longer resisted the bewitchment: he wanted all of it. His companions and himself were as trees walking, and when they had taken their seats at a table in the men's restaurant of a hotel where he had never been, he was not roused from his rapturous apathy even by the conduct of probably the most remarkable *maître d'hôtel* in the world.

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"You don't git 'em!" said this personage briefly, when Potter had ordered chops and "*œufs à la creole*" and lettuce salad, from a card. "You got to eat partridge and asparagus tips salad!"

And he went away, leaving the terrible Potter resigned and unrebellious.

The partridge was undeniable when it came: a stuffed man would have eaten it. But Talbot Potter and his two guests did little more than nibble it, they neither ate nor talked, and yet they looked anything but unhappy. Detached from their surroundings, as they sat over their coffee, they might have been taken to be three poetic gentlemen listening to a serenade.

After a long and apparently satisfactory silence, Talbot Potter looked at his watch, but not, as it proved, to see if it was time to return to the theatre, his ensuing action being to send a messenger to procure a fresh orchid to take the place of the one that had begun to droop a little from his buttonhole. He attached the new one with an attentive gravity shared by his companions.

"Good thing, a boutonniére," he explained. "Lighten it up a little. Rehearsals dry work, usually. Thinking about it last night: Why not

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lighten it up a little? Why shouldn't an actor dress as well for his company of fellow-workers as he would for a company of strangers at a reception? Ought to make it as cheerful as we can."

"Yes," said Tinker, nodding. "Something in that. I believe they work better. I must say I never saw much better work than those people were doing this morning. It was a fine rehearsal."

"It's a fine company," Potter said warmly. "They're the best people I ever had. They're *all* good—every one of them, and they're putting their hearts into this play. It's the kind of work that makes me proud to be an actor. I *am* proud to be an actor! Is there anything better?" He touched the young playwright on the arm, a gesture that hinted affection. "Stewart Canby," he said, "I want to tell you I think we're going to make a big thing out of this play. It's going to be the best I've ever done. It's going to be beautiful!"

From the doorway into the lobby of the hotel there came a pretty sound of girlish voices whispering and laughing excitedly, and, glancing that way, the three men beheld a group of peering nymphs who fled, delighted.

"Ladies stop to rubber at Mr. Potter," explained

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the remarkable head-waiter over the star's shoulder. "Mr. Potter, it's time you got marrit, anyhow. You git marrit, you don't git stared at so much!" He paused not for a reply, but hastened away to countermand the order of another customer.

"Married," said Potter musingly. "Well, there is such a thing as remaining a bachelor too long—even for an actor."

"Widower, either," assented Mr. Tinker as from a gentle reverie. "A man's never too old to get married."

His employer looked at him somewhat disapprovingly, but said nothing; and presently the three rose, without vocal suggestion from any of them, and strolled thoughtfully back to the theatre, pausing a moment by the way, while Tinker bought a white carnation for his buttonhole. There was a good deal, he remarked absent-mindedly, in what Mr. Potter had said about lightening up a rehearsal.

Probably there never was a more lightened-up rehearsal than that afternoon's. Potter's amiability continued—nay, it increased: he was cordial; he was angelic; he was exalted and unprecedented. A stranger would have thought Packer the person in control; and the actors, losing their nervousness,

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were allowed to display not only their energy but their intelligence. The stage became a cheery workshop, where ambition flourished and kindness was the rule. For thus did the starry happiness that glowed within the beatific bosom of the little "ingénue" make Arcady around her.

At four o'clock Talbot Potter stepped to the front of the stage and lifted his hand benevolently. "That will do for to-day," he said, facing the company. "Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you. I have never had a better rehearsal, and I think it is only your due to say you have pleased me very much, indeed. I cannot tell you how much. I feel strongly assured of our success in this play. Again I thank you. Ladies and gentlemen"—he waved his hand in dismissal—"till to-morrow morning."

"By Joles!" old Carson Tinker muttered. "I never knew anything like it!"

"Oh—ah—Packer," called the star, as the actors moved toward the doors. "Packer, ask Miss—Malone to wait a moment. I want—I'd like to go over a little business in the next act before to-morrow."

"Yes, Mr. Potter?" It was she who answered, turning eagerly to him.

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"In a moment, Miss Malone." He spoke to the stage-manager in a low tone, and the latter came down into the auditorium, where Canby and Tinker had remained in their seats.

"He says for you not to wait, gentlemen. There's nothing more to do this afternoon, and he may be detained quite a time."

The violet boutonniére and the white carnation went somewhat reluctantly up the aisle together and, after a last glance back at the stage from the doorway, found themselves in the colder air of the lobby, a little wilted.

Bidding Tinker farewell, on the steps of the theatre, Canby walked briskly out to the park, and there, abating his energy, paced the loneliest paths he could find until long after dark. They were not lonely for him: a radiant presence went with him through the twilight. She was all about him: in the blue brightness of the afterglow, in the haze of the meadow stretches, and in the elusive woodland scents that vanished as he caught them—she was in the rosy vapour wreaths on the high horizon, in the laughter of children playing somewhere in the darkness, in the twinkling of the lights that began to show—for now she was wherever a lover finds his

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lady, and that is everywhere. He went over and over their talk of the morning, rehearsing wonderful things he would say to her upon the morrow, and taking the liberty of suggesting replies from her even more wonderful. It was a rhapsody: he was as happy as Tom o' Bedlam.

By and by, he went to a restaurant in the park and ordered food to be brought him. Then, after looking at it with an expression of fixed animation for half an hour, he paid for it and went home. He let himself into the boarding-house quietly, having hazy impressions that he was not popular there, also that it might be embarrassing to encounter Miss Cornish in the hall; and, after reconnoitring the stairway, went cautiously up to his room.

Three minutes later he came bounding down again, stricken white, and not caring if he encountered the devil. On his table he had found a package—the complete manuscript of "Roderick Hanscom" and this scrawl:

CANBY: I can't produce your play—everything off.

Y'rs,

TAL'T P'R.

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CHAPTER XI

CARSON TINKER was in the elevator at the Patheon, and the operator was closing the door thereof, about to ascend, but delayed upon a sound of running footsteps and a call of "Up!" Stewart Canby plunged into the cage; his hat, clutched in his hand, disclosing emphatically that he had been at his hair again.

"What's he mean?" he demanded fiercely. "What have *I* done?"

"What's the matter?" inquired the calm Tinker.

"What's he called it off for?"

"Called what off?"

"The play! My play!"

"I don't know what you're talking about. I haven't seen him since rehearsal. His Japanese boy called me on the telephone a little while ago and told me he wanted to see me."

"He did?" cried the distracted Canby. "The Japanese boy wanted to see——"

"No," Tinker corrected. "*He* did."

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"And you haven't heard——"

"Twelfth," urged the operator, having opened the door. "Twelfth, if you please, gentlemen."

"I haven't heard anything to cause excitement," said Tinker, stepping out. "I haven't heard anything at all." He pressed the tiny disc beside the door of Potter's apartment. "What's upset you?"

With a pathetic gesture Canby handed him Potter's note. "What have *I* done? What does he think I've done to him?"

Tinker read the note and shook his head. "The Lord knows! You see he's all moods, and they change—they change any time. He knows his business, but you can't count on him. He's liable to do anything—anything at all."

"But what reason——"

The Japanese boy, Sato, stood bobbing in the doorway.

"Mis' Potter kassee," he said courteously. "Ve'y so'y Mis' Potter kassee nobody."

"Can't see us?" said Tinker. "Yes, he can. You telephoned me that he wanted to see me not over a quarter of an hour ago."

Sato beamed upon him enthusiastically. "Yisso,

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yisso! See Mis' Tinker, yisso! You come in, Mis' Tinker. Ve'y so'y. Mis' Potter kassee nobody."

"You mean he'll see Mr. Tinker but won't see anybody else?" cried the playwright.

"Yisso," said Sato, delighted. "Ve'y so'y. Mis' Potter kassee nobody."

"I will see him. I——"

"Wait. It's all right," Tinker reassured him soothingly. "It's all right, Sato. You go and tell Mr. Potter that I'm here and Mr. Canby came with me."

"Yisso." Sato stood back from the door obediently, and they passed into the hall. "You sidowm please."

"Tell him we're waiting in here," said Tinker, leading the way into the cream-coloured salon.

"Yisso." Sato disappeared.

The pretty room was exquisitely cheerful, a coal fire burning rosily in the neat little grate, but for its effect upon Canby it might have been a dentist's anteroom. He was unable to sit, and began to pace up and down, shampooing himself with both hands.

"I've racked my brains every step of the way here," he groaned. "All I could think of was that

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possibly I've unconsciously paralleled some other play that I never saw. Maybe someone's told him about a plot like mine. Such things must happen—they do happen, of course—because all plots are old. But I can't believe my treatment of it could be so like——"

"I don't think it's that," said Tinker. "It's never anything you expect—with him."

"Well, what else can it be?" the playwright demanded. "I haven't done anything to offend him. What have I done that he should——"

"You'd better sit down," the manager advised him. "Going plumb crazy never helped anything yet that I know of."

"But, good heavens! How can I——"

"*Sh!*" whispered Tinker.

A tragic figure made its appearance upon the threshold of the inner doorway: Potter, his face set with epic woe, gloom burning in his eyes like the green fire in a tripod at a funeral of state. His plastic hair hung damp and irregular over his white brow—a wreath upon a tombstone in the rain—and his garment, from throat to ankle, was a dressing-gown of dead black, embroidered in purple; soiled, magnificent, awful. Beneath its midnight border

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were his bare ankles, final testimony of his desperate condition, for only in ultimate despair does a suffering man remove his trousers. The feet themselves were distractedly not of the tableau, being immersed in bedroom shoes of gay white fur shaped in a Romeo pattern; but this was the grimmest touch of all—the merry song of mad Ophelia.

"Mr. Potter!" the playwright began, "I——"

Potter turned without a word and disappeared into the room whence he came.

"Mr. Potter!" Canby started to follow. "Mr. Pot——"

"*Sh!*" whispered Tinker.

Potter appeared again upon the threshold. In one hand he held a large goblet; in the other a bottle of Bourbon whiskey, just opened. With solemn tread he approached a delicate table, set the goblet upon it, and lifted the bottle high above.

"I am in no condition to talk to anybody," he said hoarsely. "I am about to take my first drink of spirits in five years."

And he tilted the bottle. The liquor clucked and guggled, plashed into the goblet, and splashed upon the table; but when he set the bottle down the glass was full to its capacious brim, and looked, upon the

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little "Louis Sixteenth" table, like a sot at the Trianon. Potter stepped back and pointed to it majestically.

"*That*," he said, "is the size of the drink I am about to take!"

"Mr. Potter," said Canby hotly, "will you tell me what's the matter with my play? Haven't I made every change you suggested? Haven't——"

Potter tossed his arms above his head and flung himself full length upon the chaise longue.

"*STOP* it!" he shouted. "I won't be pestered! I won't! Nothing's the matter with your play!"

"Then what——"

Potter swung himself round to a sitting position and hammered with his open palm upon his knee for emphasis: "Nothing's the matter with it, I tell you! I simply won't play it!"

"Why not?"

"I simply won't play it! I don't *like* it!"

The playwright dropped into a chair, open-mouthed. "Will you tell me why you ever accepted it?"

"I don't like *any* play! I hate 'em all! I'm through with 'em all! I'm through with the whole business! 'Show business!'" He repeated the

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phrase with concentrated bitterness. "'Show-business!' Faugh!"

Old Tinker regarded him thoughtfully, then inquired: "Gone back on it?"

"I tell you I'm going to buy a farm!" He sprang up, went to the mantel, and struck it a startling blow with his fist, which appeared to calm him somewhat—for a moment. "I've been thinking of it for a long time. I ought never to have been in this business at all, and I m going to live in the country. Oh, I'm in my right mind!" He paused to glare indignantly in response to old Tinker's steady gaze. "Of course you think 'something's happened' to upset me. Well, nothing has. Nothing of the slightest consequence has occurred since I saw you at rehearsal. Can't a man be allowed to think? I just came home here and got to thinking of the kind of life I lead—and decided that I'm tired of it. And I'm not going to lead it any longer. That's all."

"Ah," said Tinker quietly. "Nerves."

Talbot Potter appealed to the universe with a passionate gesture. "Nerves!" he cried bitterly. "Yes, that's what they say when an actor dares to *think*. 'Go on! Play your part! Be a marionette forever!' That's what you tell us! 'Slave for your

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living, you sordid little puppet! Squirm and sweat and strut, but don't you ever dare to *think!*' You tell us that because you know if we ever did stop to think for one instant about ourselves you wouldn't *have* any actors! Actors! Faugh! What do we get, I ask you?"

He strode close to Tinker and shook a frantic forefinger within a foot of the quiet old fellow's face.

"What do I get?" he demanded, passionately. "Do you think it means anything to *me* that some fat old woman sees me making love to a sawdust actress at a matinee and then goes home and hates her fat old husband across the dinner-table?"

He returned to the fireplace, seeming appeased, at least infinitesimally, by this thought. "There wouldn't even be *that*, except for the mystery. It's only because I'm mysterious to them—the way a man always thinks the girl he doesn't know is prettier than the one he's with. What's that got to do with *acting?* What is acting, anyhow?" His voice rose passionately again. "I'll tell you *one* thing it is: It's the most sordid profession in this devilish world!"

He strode to the centre of the room. "It's at the bottom—in the muck! *That's* where it is. And

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it ought to be! What am I, out there on that silly platform they call a stage? A fool, that's all, making faces, and pretending to be somebody with another name, for two dollars! A monkey-on-a-stick for the children! Of course the world despises us! Why shouldn't it? It calls us mummers and mountebanks, and that's what we are! Buffoons! We aren't men and women at all—we're strolling players! We're gypsies! One of us marries a broker's daughter and her relatives say she's married 'a damned actor!' That's what they say—'a damned actor!' Great heavens, Tinker, can't a man get tired of being called a 'damned actor' without your making all this uproar over it—squalling '*nerves*' in my face till I wish I was dead and done with it!"

He went back to the fireplace again, but omitted another dolorous stroke upon the mantel. "And look at the women in the profession," he continued, as he turned to face his visitors. "My soul! Look at *them!* Nothing but sawdust—sawdust—sawdust! Do you expect to go on acting with sawdust? Making sawdust love to sawdust? Sawdust, I tell you! Sawdust—sawdust—saw——"

"Oh, no," said Tinker easily. "Not by any means. No."

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"Show me one that isn't sawdust!" the tragedian cried fiercely. "Show me just one!"

"We-ll," said Tinker with extraordinary deliberation, "to start near home: Wanda Malone."

Potter burst into terrible laughter. "*All* sawdust! That's why I discharged her this afternoon."

"You what?" Canby shouted incredulously.

"I dismissed her from my company," said Potter with a startling change to icy calmness. "I dismissed her from my company this afternoon."

Old Tinker leaned forward. "You didn't!"

Potter's iciness increased. "Shall I repeat it? I was obliged to dismiss Miss Wanda Malone from my company, this afternoon, after rehearsal."

"Why?" Canby gasped.

"Because," said Potter, with the same calmness, "she has an utterly commonplace mind."

Canby rose in agitation, quite unable, for that moment, to speak; but Tinker, still leaning forward, gazing intently at the face of the actor, made a low, longdrawn sound of wonder and affirmation, the slow exclamation of a man comprehending what amazes him. "So that's it!"

"Besides being intensely ordinary," said Potter, with superiority, "I discovered that she is deceitful.

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That has nothing whatever to do with my decision to leave the stage." He whirled upon Tinker suddenly, and shouted: "No matter what you think!"

"No," said Tinker. "No matter."

Potter laughed. "Talbot Potter leaves the stage because a little 'ingénue' understudy tries to break the rules of his company! Likely, isn't it?"

"Looks so," said old Tinker.

"Does it?" retorted Potter with rising fury. "Then I'll tell you, since you seem not to know it, that I'm *not* going to leave the stage! Can't a man give vent to his feelings once in his life without being caught up and held to it by every old school-teacher that's stumbled into the 'show-business' by mistake! We're going right on with this play, I tell you; we rehearse it to-morrow morning just the same as if this hadn't happened. Only there will be a new 'ingénue' in Miss Malone's place. People can't break iron rules in my company. Maybe they could in Mounet-Sully's, but they can't in mine!"

"What rule did she break?" Canby's voice was unsteady. "What rule?"

"Yes," Tinker urged. "Tell us what it was."

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"After rehearsal," the star began with dignity, "I was—I——" He paused. "I was disappointed in her."

"Ye-es?" drawled Tinker encouragingly.

Potter sent him a vicious glance, but continued: "I had hopes of her intelligence—as an actress. She seemed to have, also, a fairly attractive personality. I felt some little—ah, interest in her, personally. There is something about her that——" Again he paused. "I talked to her—about her part—at length; and finally I—ah—said I should be glad to walk home with her, as it was after dark. She said no, she wouldn't let me take so much trouble, because she lived almost at the other end of Brooklyn. It seemed to me that—ah, she is very young—you both probably noticed that—so I said I would—that is, I offered to drive her home in a taxicab. She thanked me, but said she couldn't. She kept saying that she was sorry, but she *couldn't*. It seemed very peculiar, and, in fact, I insisted. I asked her if she objected to me as an escort, and she said, 'Oh, no!' and got more and more embarrassed. I wanted to know what was the matter and why she couldn't seem to like—that is, I talked very kindly to her, very kindly indeed. Nobody could have been

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kinder!" He cleared his throat loudly and firmly, with an angry look at Tinker. "I say nobody could have been kinder to an obscure member of the company than I was to Miss Malone. But I was decided. That's all. That's all there was to it. I was merely kind. That's all." He waved his hand as in dismissal of the subject.

"All?" repeated Canby. "All? You haven't——"

"Oh, yes." Potter seemed surprised at his own omission. "Oh, yes. Right in the midst of—of what I was saying—she blurted out that she couldn't let *me* take her home, because 'Lancelot' was waiting for her at a corner drug-store."

"Lancelot!" There was a catch of dismay in Canby's outcry.

"That's what *I* said, 'Lancelot!'" cried Potter, more desolately than he intended. "It seems they've been meeting after rehearsal, in their damn corner drug-store. Lancelot!" His voice rose in fury. "If I'd known I had a man named *Lancelot* in my company, I'd have discharged him long ago! If I'd known it was *his* name, I'd have shot him! 'Lancelot!' He came sneaking in there just after she'd blundered it all out to me. Got uneasy because she didn't come, and came to see what was the

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matter. Naturally, I discharged them both, on the spot! I've never had a rule of my company broken yet—and I never will! He didn't say a word. He didn't dare."

"Who?" shouted Canby and old Tinker together.

"Lancelot!" said Potter savagely.

"Who?"

"*Packer!* His first name's Lancelot, the hypocrite! L. Smith Packer! She's Mrs. Packer! They were married two days before rehearsals began. She's Mrs. L. Smith Packer!"

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CHAPTER XII

AS THE sound of the furious voice stopped short, there fell a stricken silence upon these three men.

Old Carson Tinker's gaze drifted downward from his employer's face. He sat, then, gazing into the rosy little fire until something upon the lapel of his coat caught his attention—a wilted and disreputable carnation. He threw it into the fire; and, with a sombre satisfaction, watched it sizzle. This brief pleasure ended, he became expressionless and relapsed into complete mummification.

Potter cleared his throat several times, and as many times seemed about to speak, and did not; but finally, hearing a murmur from the old man gazing at the fire, he requested to be informed of its nature.

"What?" Tinker asked, feebly.

"I said: 'What are you mumbling about?'"

"Nothing."

"What was it you said?"

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"I said it was the bride-look," said the old man gently. "That's what it was about her—the bride-look."

"The bride-look!"

It was a word that went deep into the mourning heart of the playwright. "The bride-look!" That was it: the bride's happiness!

"She had more than that," said Potter peevishly, but, if the others had noticed it, his voice shook. "She *could* act! And I don't know how the devil to get along without that hypocrite. Just like her to marry the first regular man that asked her!"

Then young Stewart Canby had a vision of a room in a boarding-house far over in Brooklyn, and of two poor, brave young people there, and of a loss more actual than his own—a vision of a hard-working, careworn, stalwart Packer trying to comfort a weeping little bride who had lost her chance—the one chance—"that *might* never have come!"

Something leaped into generous life within him.

"I think I was going to ask her to marry *me*, to-morrow," he said, turning to Talbot Potter. "But I'm glad Packer's the man. For years he's been a kind of nurse for you, Mr. Potter. And

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that's what she needs—a nurse—because she's a genius, too. And it will all be wasted if she doesn't get her chance!"

"Are you asking me to take her back?" said Potter fiercely. "Do you think I'll break one of my iron——"

"Great God! we couldn't *all* have married her!" cried the playwright in a burst of inspiration. "But if you take her back we can all *see* her—every day!"

The actor gazed upon him sternly, but with sensitive lips beginning to quiver. He spoke uncertainly.

"Well," he began. "I'm no stubborn Frenchman——"

"Do it!" cried Canby.

Then Potter's expression changed: he looked queer.

He clapped his hands loudly. Sato appeared.

"Sato, take that stuff out." He pointed to the untouched whiskey. "Order supper at ten o'clock—for five people. Champagne. Orchids. Get me a taxicab in half an hour."

"Yisso!"

Tinker rose, astounded. "Taxicab? Where you——"

"To Brooklyn!" shouted Potter with shining eyes.

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"She'll drive with me if I bring them *both*, I guess, won't she?" He began to sing:

"For to-night we'll merry, merry be!
For to-night we'll merry, merry be——"

Leaping uproariously upon the aged Tinker, he caught him by the waist and waltzed him round and round the room.

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MARY SMITH

HENRY MILLICK CHESTER, rising early from intermittent slumbers, found himself the first of the crowded Pullman to make a toilet in the men's smoke-and-wash-room, and so had the place to himself—an advantage of high dramatic value to a person of his age and temperament, on account of the mirrors which, set at various angles, afford a fine view of the profile. Henry Millick Chester, scouring cinders and stickiness from his eyes and rouging his ears with honest friction, enriched himself of this too unfamiliar opportunity. He smiled and was warmly interested in the results of his smile in reflection, particularly in some pleasant alterations it effected upon an outline of the cheek usually invisible to the bearer. He smiled graciously, then he smiled sardonically. Other smiles he offered—the tender smile, the forbidding smile, the austere and the seductive, the haughty and the pleading, the mordant and the compassionate, the tolerant but incredulous smile

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of a man of the world, and the cold, ascetic smile that shows a woman that her shallow soul has been read all too easily—pastimes abandoned only with the purely decorative application of shaving lather to his girlish chin. However, as his unbeetling brow was left unobscured, he was able to pursue his physiognomical researches and to produce for his continued enlightenment a versatile repertory of frowns—the stern, the quizzical, the bitter, the treacherous, the bold, the agonized, the inquisitive, the ducal, and the frown of the husband who says: "I forgive you. Go!" A few minutes later Mr. Chester, abruptly pausing in the operation of fastening his collar, bent a sudden, passionate interest upon his right forearm, without apparent cause and with the air of never having seen it until that moment. He clenched his fingers tightly, producing a slight stringiness above the wrist, then crooked his elbow with intensity, noting this enormous effect in all the mirrors. Regretfully, he let his shirtsleeves fall and veil the rare but private beauties just discovered, rested his left hand negligently upon his hip, extended his right in a gesture of flawlessly aristocratic grace, and, with a slight inclination of his head, uttered aloud these simple

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but befitting words: "I thank ye, my good people." T' yoong Maister was greeting the loyal tenantry who acclaimed his return to Fielding Manor, a flowered progress thoroughly incomprehensible to the Pullman porter whose transfixed eye—glazed upon an old-gold face intruded through the narrow doorway—Mr. Chester encountered in the glass above the nickeled washbasins. The Libyan withdrew in a cloud of silence, and t' yoong Maister, flushing somewhat, resumed his toilet with annoyed precision and no more embroidery. He had yesterday completed his sophomore year; the brushes he applied to his now adult locks were those of a junior. And with a man's age had come a man's cares and responsibilities. Several long years had rolled away since for the last time he had made himself sick on a train in a club-car orgy of cubebs and sarsaparilla pop.

Zigzagging through shoe-bordered aisles of sleepers in morning dishevelment, he sought the dining car, where the steward escorted him to an end table for two. He would have assumed his seat with that air of negligent hauteur which was his chosen manner for public appearances, had not the train, taking a curve at high speed, heaved him into the

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undesirable embrace of an elderly man breakfasting across the aisle. "Keep your feet, sonny; keep your feet," said this barbarian, little witting that he addressed a member of the nineteen-something prom. committee. People at the next table laughed genially, and Mr. Chester, muttering a word of hostile apology, catapulted into his assigned place, his cheeks hot with the triple outrage.

He relieved himself a little by the icy repulsion with which he countered the cordial advances of the waiter, who took his order and wished him a good morning, hoped he had slept well, declared the weather delightful and, unanswered, yet preserved his beautiful courtesy unimpaired. When this humble ambassador had departed on his mission to the kitchen Henry Millick Chester, unwarrantably persuaded that all eyes were searching his every inch and angle—an impression not uncharacteristic of his years—gazed out of the window with an indifference which would have been obtrusive if any of the other breakfasters had happened to notice it. The chill exclusiveness of his expression was a rebuke to such prying members of the proletariat as might be striving to read his thoughts, and barred his fellow passengers from every privilege to his

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consideration. The intensely reserved gentleman was occupied with interests which were the perquisites of only his few existing peers in birth, position, and intelligence, none of whom, patently, was in that car.

He looked freezingly upon the abashed landscape, which fled in shame; nor was that wintry stare relaxed when the steward placed someone opposite him at the little table. Nay, our frosty scholar now intensified the bleakness of his isolation, retiring quite to the pole in reproval of this too close intrusion. He resolutely denied the existence of his vis-à-vis, refused consciousness of its humanity, even of its sex, and then inconsistently began to perspire with the horrible impression that it was glaring at him fixedly. It was a dreadful feeling. He felt himself growing red, and coughed vehemently to afford the public an explanation of his change of colour. At last, his suffering grown unendurable, he desperately turned his eyes full upon the newcomer. She was not looking at him at all, but down at the edge of the white cloth on her own side of the table; and she was the very prettiest girl he had ever seen in his life.

She was about his own age. Her prettiness was

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definitely extreme, and its fair delicacy was complete and without any imperfection whatever. She was dressed in pleasant shades of tan and brown. A brown veil misted the rim of her hat, tan gloves were folded back from her wrists; and they, and all she wore, were fresh and trim and ungrimed by the dusty journey. She was charming. Henry Millick Chester's first gasping appraisal of her was perfectly accurate, for she *was* a peach—or a rose, or anything that is dewy and fresh and delectable. She was indeed some smooth. She was the smoothest thing in the world, and the world knows it!

She looked up.

Henry Millick Chester was lost.

At the same instant that the gone feeling came over him she dropped her eyes again to the edge of the table. Who can tell if she knew what she had done?

The conversation began with appalling formalities, which preluded the most convenient placing of a sugar bowl and the replenishing of an exhausted salt cellar. Then the weather, spurned as the placative offering of the gentle waiter, fell from the lips of the princess in words of diamonds and rubies and pearls. Our Henry took up the weather where she

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left it; he put it to its utmost; he went forward with it, prophesying weather; he went backward with it, recalling weather; he spun it out and out, while she agreed to all he said, until this overworked weather got so stringy that each obscurely felt it to be hideous. The thread broke; fragments wandered in the air for a few moments, but disappeared; a desperate propriety descended, and they fell into silence over their eggs.

Frantically Mr. Chester searched his mind for some means to pursue the celestial encounter. According to the rules, something ought to happen that would reveal her as Patricia Beekman, the sister of his roommate, Schuyler Beekman, and to-night he should be handing the imperturbable Dawkins a wire to send: "My dear Schuyler, I married your sister this afternoon." But it seemed unlikely, because his roommate's name was Jake Schmulze, and Jake lived in Cedar Rapids; and, besides, this train wasn't coming from or going to Palm Beach—it was going to St. Louis eventually, and now hustled earnestly across the placid and largely unbutlered plains of Ohio.

Often—as everyone knows—people have been lost to each other forever through the lack of a

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word, and few have realized this more poignantly than our Henry, as he helplessly suffered the precious minutes to accumulate vacancy. True, he had thought of something to say, yet he abandoned it. Probably he was wiser to wait, as what he thought of saying was: "Will you be my wife?" It might seem premature, he feared.

The strain was relieved by a heavenly accident which saved the life of a romance near perishing at birth. That charming girl, relaxing slightly in her chair, made some small, indefinite, and entirely ladylike movement of restfulness that reached its gentle culmination upon the two feet of Mr. Chester which, obviously mistaken for structural adjuncts of the table, were thereby glorified and became beautiful on the mountains. He was not the man to criticise the remarkable ignorance of dining-car table architecture thus displayed, nor did he in any wise resent being mistaken up to the ankles for metal or wood. No. The light pressure of her small heels hardly indented the stout toes of his brown shoes; the soles of her slippers reposed upon his two insteps, and rapture shook his soul to its foundations, while the ineffable girl gazed lustrously out of the window, the clear serenity of her brilliant eyes mak-

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ing plain her complete unconsciousness of the nature of what added to her new comfort.

A terrific blush sizzled all over him, and to conceal its visible area he bent low to his coffee. She was unaware. He was transported, she—to his eyes—transfigured. Glamour diffused itself about her, sprayed about them both like showers of impalpable gold-dust, and filled the humble dining car—it filled the whole world. Transformed, seraphic waiters passed up and down the aisle in a sort of obscure radiance. A nimbus hovered faintly above the brown veil; a sacred luminosity was exhaled by the very tablecloth, where an angel's pointed fingers drummed absently.

It would be uncharitable to believe that a spirit of retaliation inspired the elderly and now replete man across the aisle, and yet, when he rose, he fell upon the neck of Henry as Henry had fallen upon his, and the shock of it jarred four shoes from the acute neighbourliness of their juxtaposition. The accursed graybeard, giggling in his senility, passed on; but that angel leaped backward in her chair while her beautiful eyes, wide open, stunned, her beautiful mouth, wide open, incredulous, gave proof that horror can look bewitching.

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"Murder!" she gasped. "Were those your *feet?*"

And as he could compass no articulate reply, she grew as pink as he, murmured inaudibly, and stared at him in wider and wilder amazement.

"It—it didn't hurt," he finally managed to stammer.

At this she covered her blushes with her two hands and began to gurgle and shake with laughter. She laughed and laughed and laughed. It became a paroxysm. He laughed, too, because she laughed. Other passengers looked at them and laughed. The waiters laughed; they approved—coloured waiters always approve of laughter—and a merry spirit went abroad in the car.

At last she controlled herself long enough to ask:

"But what did you think of me?"

"It—it didn't hurt," he repeated idiotically, to his own mortification, for he passionately aspired to say something airy and winsome; but, as he couldn't think of anything like that, he had to let it go. "Oh, not at all," he added feebly.

However, "though not so deep as a well," it served, 'twas enough, for she began to laugh again, and there loomed no further barrier in the way of

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acquaintance. Therefore it was pleasantly without constraint, and indeed as a matter of course, that he dropped into a chair beside her half an hour later, in the observation car; and something in the way she let the *Illustrated London News* slide into the vacant chair on the other side of her might have suggested that she expected him.

"I was still wondering what you must have thought of me."

This gave him an opportunity, because he had thought out a belated reply for the first time she had said it. Hence, quick as a flash, he made the dashing rejoinder:

"It wasn't so much what I thought of you, but what I thought of myself—I thought I was in heaven!"

She must have known what pretty sounds her laughter made. She laughed a great deal. She even had a way of laughing in the middle of some of her words, and it gave them a kind of ripple. There are girls who naturally laugh like that; others learn to; a few won't, and some can't. It isn't fair to the ones that can't.

"But you oughtn't to tell me that," she said.

It was in the middle of "oughtn't" that she

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rippled. A pen cannot express it, neither can a typewriter, and no one has yet invented a way of writing with a flute; but the effect on Henry shows what a wonderful ripple it was. Henry trembled. From this moment she had only to ripple to make Henry tremble. Henry was more in love than he had been at breakfast. Henry was a Goner.

"Why oughtn't I to?" he demanded with white intensity. "If anything's true it's right to tell it, isn't it? I believe that everybody has a right to tell the truth, don't you?"

"Ye-es——"

"You take the case of a man that's in love," said this rather precipitate gentleman; "isn't it right for him to——"

"But suppose," she interrupted, becoming instantly serious with the introduction of the great topic—"Suppose he isn't *really* in love. Don't you think there are very few cases of people truly and deeply caring for each other?"

"There are men," he said firmly, "who know how to love truly and deeply, and could never in their lives care for anybody but the one woman they have picked out. I don't say all men feel that way; I don't think they do. But there are a few that are

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capable of it." The seats in an observation car are usually near neighbours, and it happened that the brown cuff of a tan sleeve, extended reposefully on the arm of her chair, just touched the back of his hand, which rested on the arm of his. This ethereally light contact continued. She had no apparent cognizance of it, but a vibrant thrill passed through him, and possibly quite a hearty little fire might have been built under him without his perceiving good cause for moving. He shook, gulped, and added: "I am!"

"But how could you be sure of that," she said thoughtfully, "until you tried?" And as he seemed about to answer, perhaps too impulsively, she checked him with a smiling, "At your age!"

"You don't know how old I am. I'm older than you!"

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-one next March."

"What day?"

"The seventh."

"That is singular!"

"Why?"

"Because," she began in a low tone and with full recognition of the solemn import of the revelation

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—"Because my birthday is only one day after yours. I was twenty years old the eighth of last March."

"By George!" The exclamation came from him, husky with awe.

There was a fateful silence.

"Yes, I was born on the eighth," she said slowly.

"And me on the seventh!" At such a time no man is a purist.

"It is strange," she said.

"Strange! I came into the world just one day before you did!"

They looked at each other curiously, deeply stirred. Coincidence could not account for these birthdays of theirs, nor chance for their meeting on a train "like this." Henry Millick Chester was breathless. The mysteries were glimpsed. No doubt was possible—he and the wondrous creature at his side were meant for each other, intended from the beginning of eternity.

She dropped her eyes slowly from his, but he was satisfied that she had felt the marvel precisely as he had felt it.

"Don't you think," she said gently, "that a girl has seen more of the world at twenty than a man?"

Mr. Chester well wished to linger upon the sub-

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ject of birthdays; however, the line of original research suggested by her question was alluring also. "Yes—and no," he answered with admirable impartiality. "In some ways, yes. In some ways, no. For instance, you take the case of a man that's in love——"

"Well," interrupted the lady, "I think, for instance, that a girl understands men better at twenty than men do women."

"It may be," he admitted, nodding. "I like to think about the deeper things like this sometimes."

"So do I. I think they're interesting," she said with that perfect sympathy of understanding which he believed she was destined to extend to him always and in all things. "Life itself is interesting. Don't you think so?"

"I think it's the most interesting subject there can be. Real life, that is, though—not just on the surface. Now, for instance, you take the case of a man that's in——"

"Do you go in much for reading?" she asked.

"Sure. But as I was saying, you take——"

"I think reading gives us so many ideas, don't you?"

"Yes. I get a lot out of it. I——"

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"I do, too. I try to read only the best things," she said. "I don't believe in reading everything, and there's so much to read nowadays that isn't really good."

"Who do you think," he inquired with deference, "is the best author now?"

It was not a question to be settled quite offhand; she delayed her answer slightly, then, with a gravity appropriate to the literary occasion, temporized: "Well, since Victor Hugo is dead, it's hard to say just who is the best."

"Yes, it is," he agreed. "We get that in the English course in college. There aren't any great authors any more. I expect probably Swinburne's the best."

She hesitated. "Perhaps; but more as a poet."

He assented. "Yes, that's so. I expect he would be classed more as a poet. Come to think of it, I believe he's dead, too. I'm not sure, though; maybe it was Beerbohm Tree—somebody like that. I've forgotten; but, anyway, it doesn't matter. I didn't mean poetry; I meant who do you think writes the best books? Mrs. Humphry Ward?"

"Yes, she's good, and so's Henry James."

"I've never read anything by Henry James. I

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guess I'll read some of his this summer. What's the best one to begin on?"

The exquisite pink of her cheeks extended its area almost imperceptibly. "Oh, any one. They're all pretty good. Do you care for Nature?"

"Sure thing," he returned quickly. "Do you?"

"I love it!"

"So do I. I can't do much for mathematics, though."

"Br-r!" She shivered prettily. "I hate it "

"So do I. I can't give astronomy a whole lot, either."

She turned a softly reproachful inquiry upon him. "Oh, don't you love to look at the stars?"

In horror lest the entrancing being think him a brute, he responded with breathless haste: "Oh, rath-er-r! To look at 'em, sure thing! I meant astronomy in college; that's mostly math, you know —just figures. But stars to look at—of course that's different. Why, I look up at 'em for hours sometimes!" He believed what he was saying. "I look up at 'em, and think and think and think——"

"So do I." Her voice was low and hushed; there was something almost holy in the sound of it, and a delicate glow suffused her lovely, upraised face—

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like that picture of Saint Cecilia, he thought. "Oh, I love the stars! And music—and flowers——"

"And birds," he added automatically in a tone that, could it by some miracle have been heard at home, would have laid his nine-year-old brother flat on the floor in a might-be mortal swoon.

A sweet warmth centred in the upper part of his diaphragm and softly filtered throughout him. The delicious future held no doubts or shadows for him. It was assured. He and this perfect woman had absolutely identical tastes; their abhorrences and their enthusiasms marched together; they would never know a difference in all their lives to come. Destiny unrolled before him a shining pathway which they two would walk hand-in-hand through the summer days to a calm and serene autumn, respected and admired by the world, but finding ever their greatest and most sacred joy in the light of each other's eyes—that light none other than the other could evoke.

Could it be possible, he wondered, that he was the same callow boy who but yesterday pranced and exulted in the "pee-rade" of the new juniors! How absurd and purposeless that old life seemed; how far away, how futile, and how childish! Well,

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it was over, finished. By this time to-morrow he would have begun his business career.

Back in the old life, he had expected to go through a law school after graduating from college, subsequently to enter his father's office. That meant five years before even beginning to practice, an idea merely laughable now. There was a men's furnishing store on a popular corner at home; it was an establishment which had always attracted him, and what pleasanter way to plow the road to success than through acres of variously woven fabrics, richly coloured silks, delicate linens, silver mountings and odorous leathers, in congenial association with neckties, walking-sticks, hosiery, and stickpins? He would be at home a few hours hence, and he would not delay. After lunch he would go boldly to his father and say: "Father, I have reached man's estate and I have put away childish things. I have made up my mind upon a certain matter and you will only waste time by any effort to alter this, my firm determination. Father, I here and now relinquish all legal ambitions, for the reason that a mercantile career is more suited to my inclinations and my abilities. Father, I have met the one and only woman I can ever care for, and I

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intend to make her my wife. Father, you have always dealt squarely with me; I will deal squarely with you. I ask you the simple question: Will you or will you not advance me the funds to purchase an interest in Paul H. Hoy & Company's Men's Outfitting Establishment? If you will not, then I shall seek help elsewhere."

Waking dreams are as swift, sometimes, as the other kind—which, we hear, thread mazes so labyrinthine "between the opening and the closing of a door"; and a twenty-year-old fancy, fermenting in the inclosure of a six-and-seven-eighth plaid cap, effervesces with a power of sizzling and sparkling and popping.

"I believe I love music best of all," said the girl dreamily.

"Do you play?" he asked, and his tone and look were those of one who watches at the sick-bed of a valued child.

"Yes, a little."

"I love the piano." He was untroubled by any remorse for what he and some of his gang had done only two days since to a previously fine instrument in his dormitory entry. He had forgotten the dead past in his present vision, which was of a luxurious

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room in a spacious mansion, and a tired man of affairs coming quietly into that room—from a conference at which he had consolidated the haberdashery trade of the world—and sinking noiselessly upon a rich divan, while a beautiful woman in a dress of brown and tan, her hair slightly silvered, played to him through the twilight upon a grand piano, the only other sound in the great house being the softly murmurous voices of perfectly trained children being put to bed in a distant nursery upstairs.

"I like the stage, too," she said. "Don't you?"

"You know! Did you see The Tinkle-Dingle Girl?"

"Yes. I liked it."

"It's a peach show." He spoke with warranted authority. During the university term just finished he had gone eight times to New York, and had enriched his critical perceptions of music and the drama by ten visits to The Tinkle-Dingle Girl, two of his excursions having fallen on matinee days. "Those big birds that played the comedy parts were funny birds, weren't they?"

"The tramp and the brewer? Yes. Awfully funny."

"We'll go lots to the theatre!" He spoke eagerly

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and with superb simplicity, quite without consciousness that he was skipping much that would usually be thought necessarily intermediate. An enchanting vision engrossed his mind's eye. He saw himself night after night at The Tinkle-Dingle Girl, his lovely wife beside him—growing matronly, perhaps, but slenderly matronly—with a grace of years that only added to her beauty, and always wearing tan gloves and a brown veil.

The bewilderment of her expression was perhaps justified.

"What!"

At this he realized the import of what he had said and what, in a measure, it did assume. He became pinkish, then pink, then more pink; and so did she. Paralyzed, the blushing pair looked at each other throughout this duet in colour, something like a glint of alarm beginning to show through the wide astonishment in her eyes; and with the perception of this he was assailed by an acute perturbation. He had spoken thoughtlessly, even hastily, he feared; he should have given her more time. Would she rise now with chilling dignity and leave him, it might be forever? Was he to lose her just when he had found her? He shuddered at the

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ghastly abyss of loneliness disclosed by the possibility. But this was only the darkest moment before a radiance that shot heavenward like the flaming javelins of an equatorial sunrise.

Her eyes lowered slowly till the long, brown lashes shadowed the rose-coloured cheek and the fall of her glance came to rest upon the arms of their two chairs, where the edge of her coat sleeve just touched the knuckle of his little finger. Two people were passing in front of them; there was no one who could see; and with a lightning-swift impulse she turned her wrist and for a half second, while his heart stopped beating, touched all his fingers with her own, then as quickly withdrew her hand and turned as far away from him as the position of her chair permitted.

It was a caress of incredible brevity, and so fleeting, so airy, that it was little more than a touch of light itself, like the faint quick light from a flying star one might just glimpse on one's hand as it passed. But in our pleasant world important things have resulted from touches as evanescent as that. Nature has its uses for the ineffable.

Blazing with glory, dumb with rapture, Henry Millick Chester felt his heart rebound to its work,

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while his withheld breath upheaved in a gulp that half suffocated him. Thus, blinded by the revelation of the stupefying beauty of life, he sat through a heaven-stricken interval, and time was of no moment. Gradually he began to perceive, in the midst of the effulgence which surrounded the next chair like a bright mist, the adorable contour of a shoulder in a tan coat and the ravishing outline of a rosy cheek that belonged to this divine girl who was his.

By and by he became dreamily aware of other objects beyond that cheek and that shoulder, of a fat man and his fat wife on the opposite side of the car near the end. Unmistakably they were man and wife, but it seemed to Henry that they had no reason to be—such people had no right to be married. They had no obvious right to exist at all; certainly they had no right whatever to exist in that car. Their relation to each other had become a sickening commonplace, the bleakness of it as hideously evident as their overfed convexity. It was visible that they looked upon each other as inevitable nuisances which had to be tolerated. They were horrible. Had Love ever known these people? It was unthinkable! For lips such as theirs to have pronounced the name of the god would have been

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blasphemy; for those fat hands ever to have touched, desecration! Henry hated the despicable pair.

All at once his emotion changed: he did not hate them, he pitied them. From an immense height he looked down with compassion upon their wretched condition. He pitied everybody except himself and the roseate being beside him; they floated together upon a tiny golden cloud, alone in the vast sky at an immeasurable altitude above the squalid universe. A wave of pity for the rest of mankind flooded over him, but most of all he pitied that miserable, sodden, befleshed old married couple.

He was dimly aware of a change that came over these fat people, a strangeness; but he never did realize that at this crisis his eyes, fixed intently upon them and aided by his plastic countenance, had expressed his feelings and sentiments regarding them in the most lively and vivid way. For at the moment when the stout gentleman laid his paper down, preparatory to infuriated inquiry, both he and his wife were expunged from Henry's consciousness forever and were seen of him thenceforth no more than if they had been ether and not solid flesh. The exquisite girl had been pretending to pick a thread out of her left sleeve with her right

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hand—but now at last she leaned back in her chair and again turned her face partly toward Henry. Her under lip was caught in slightly beneath her upper teeth, as if she had been doing something that possibly she oughtn't to be doing, and though the pause in the conversation had been protracted—it is impossible to calculate how long—her charming features were still becomingly overspread with rose. She looked toward her rapt companion, not at him, and her eyes were preoccupied, tender, and faintly embarrassed.

The pause continued.

He leaned a little closer to her. And he looked at her and looked at her and looked at her. At intervals his lips moved as if he were speaking, and yet he was thinking wordlessly. Leaning thus toward her, his gaze and attitude had all the intensity of one who watches a ninth-inning tie in the deciding game of a championship series. And as he looked and looked and looked, the fat man and his wife, quite unaware of their impalpability, also looked and looked and looked in grateful fascination.

"Did you——" Henry Millick Chester finally spoke these words in a voice he had borrowed, evidently from a stranger, for it did not fit his

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throat and was so deep that it disappeared—it seemed to fall down a coal-hole and ended in a dusty choke. "Did you——" he began again, two octaves higher, and immediately squeaked out. He said "Did you" five times before he subjugated the other two words.

"Did you—mean that?"

"What?" Her own voice was so low that he divined rather than heard what she said. He leaned even a little closer—and the fat man nudged his wife, who elbowed his thumb out of her side morbidly: she wasn't missing anything.

"Did you—did you mean that?"

"Mean what?"

"That!"

"I don't know what you mean."

"When you—when you—oh, you know!"

"No, I don't."

"When you—when you took my hand."

"I!"

With sudden, complete self-possession she turned quickly to face him, giving him a look of half-shocked, half-amused astonishment.

"When I took your hand?" she repeated incredulously. "What are you saying?"

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"You—you know," he stammered. "A while ago when—when—you—you——"

"I didn't do anything of the kind!" Impending indignation began to cloud the delicate face ominously. "Why in the world should I?"

"But you——"

"I didn't!" She cut him off sharply. "I couldn't. Why, it wouldn't have been nice! What made you dream I would do a thing like that? How dare you imagine such things!"

At first dumfounded, then appalled, he took the long, swift, sickening descent from his golden cloud with his mouth open, but it snapped tight at the bump with which he struck the earth. He lay prone, dismayed, abject. The lovely witch could have made him believe anything; at least it is the fact that for a moment she made him believe he had imagined that angelic little caress; and perhaps it was the sight of his utter subjection that melted her. For she flashed upon him suddenly with a dazing smile, and then, blushing again but more deeply than before, her whole attitude admitting and yielding, she offered full and amazing confession, her delicious laugh rippling tremulously throughout every word of it.

"It must have been an accident—partly!"

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"I love you!" he shouted.

The translucent fat man and his wife groped for each other feverishly, and a coloured porter touched Henry Millick Chester on the shoulder.

"Be in Richmon' less'n fi' minutes now," said the porter. He tapped the youth's shoulder twice more; it is his office to awaken the rapt dreamer. "Richmon,' In'iana, less'n fi' minutes now," he repeated more slowly.

Henry gave him a stunned and dishevelled "What?"

"You get off Richmon', don't you?"

"What of it? We haven't passed Dayton yet."

"Yessuh, long 'go. Pass' Dayton eight-fifty. Be in Richmon' mighty quick now."

The porter appeared to be a malicious liar. Henry appealed pitifully to the girl.

"But we haven't passed Dayton?"

"Yes, just after you sat down by me. We stopped several minutes."

"Yessuh. Train don't stop no minutes in Richmon' though," said the porter with a hard laugh, waving his little broom at some outlying freight cars they were passing. "Gittin' in now. I got you' bag on platfawm."

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"I don't want to be brushed," Henry said, almost sobbing. "For heaven's sake, get out!"

Porters expect anything. This one went away solemnly without even lifting his eyebrows.

The brakes were going on.

One class of railway tragedies is never recorded, though it is the most numerous of all and fills the longest list of heartbreaks; the statics ignore it, yet no train ever leaves its shed, or moves, that is not party to it. It is time and overtime that the safety-device inventors should turn their best attention to it, so that the happy day may come at last when we shall see our common carriers equipped with something to prevent these lovers' partings.

The train began to slow down.

Henry Millick Chester got waveringly to his feet; she rose at the same time and stood beside him.

"I am no boy," he began, hardly knowing what he said, but automatically quoting a fragment from his forthcoming address to his father. "I have reached man's estate and I have met the only——" He stopped short with an exclamation of horror. "You—you haven't even told me your name!"

"My name?" the girl said, a little startled.

"Yes! And your address!"

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"I'm not on my way home now," she said. "I've been visiting in New York and I'm going to St. Louis to make another visit."

"But your name!"

She gave him an odd glance of mockery, a little troubled.

"You mightn't like my name!"

"Oh, please, please!"

"Besides, do you think it's quite proper for me to——"

"Oh, please! To talk of that now! Please!" The train had stopped.

The glint of a sudden decision shone in the lovely eyes. "I'll write it for you so you won't forget."

She went quickly to the writing desk at the end of the compartment, he with her, the eyes of the fat man and his wife following them like two pairs of searchlights swung by the same mechanism.

"And where you live," urged Henry. "I shall write to you every day." He drew a long, deep breath and threw back his head. "Till the day—the day when I come for you."

"Don't look over my shoulder." She laughed shyly, wrote hurriedly upon a loose sheet, placed it in an envelope, sealed the envelope, and then, as he

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reached to take it, withheld it tantalizingly. "No. It's my name and where I live, but you can't have it. Not till you've promised not to open it until the train is clear out of the station."

Outside the window sounded the twice-repeated "Awl aboh-oh," and far ahead a fatal bell was clanging.

"I promise," he gulped.

"Then take it!"

With a strange, new-born masterfulness he made a sudden impetuous gesture and lifted both the precious envelope and the fingers that inclosed it to his lips. Then he turned and dashed to the forward end of the car where a porter remained untipped as Henry leaped from the already rapidly moving steps of the car to the ground. Instantly the wonderful girl was drawn past him, leaning and waving from the railed rear platform whither she had run for this farewell. And in the swift last look that they exchanged there was in her still-flushing, lovely face a light of tenderness and of laughter, of kindness and of something like a fleeting regret.

The train gained momentum, skimming onward and away, the end of the observation car dwindling and condensing into itself like a magician's dis-

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appearing card, while a white handkerchief, waving from the platform, quickly became an infinitesimal shred of white—and then there was nothing. The girl was gone.

Probably Henry Millick Chester owes his life to the fact that there are no gates between the station building and the tracks at Richmond. For gates and a ticket-clipping official might have delayed Henry's father in the barely successful dash he made to drag from the path of a backing local a boy wholly lost to the outward world in a state of helpless puzzlement, which already threatened to become permanent as he stared and stared at a sheet of railway notepaper whereon was written in a charming hand:

Mary Smith
Chicago
Ill.

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TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION

THE sudden popularity of Kistle Simmons' first novel, "The Heart of Alastair," astounded everybody acquainted with the young author except himself. Kistle Simmons had known since his boyhood that he was to be a celebrated person in one way or another, some day. It was thought very remarkable that his prodigious success brought about no change in his manner. Even when the sales of "Alastair" (as he presently spoke of the book) marked one hundred and fifty thousand copies, he showed no symptoms of suffocation. The very tributes to his *sang-froid* failed to impress him.

His publisher got him at once to New York and led him about. At a reception he heard a woman whisper to a male companion: "The wonderful new novelist, Kistle Simmons, is here this afternoon; they say he's charming—so unconscious." And the nasty reply: "Yes, just as unconscious as if he oughtn't to be shot at dawn!" Kistle was as un-

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affected by the coarse jealousy of the man as by the little tribute of the lady.

He remained unperturbed when the newspapers of Mill City, Pa., where he lived, flared headlines on their front pages announcing: "Frohmans Secure Dramatic Rights Alastair. Theatrical Honours For Mill City Novelist." Kistle Simmons' father, immodestly flushed, stopped business men on the street to tell them that there had appeared in all his son's clippings "not one single unfavourable review"; the reviews, indeed, almost outpraised the advertisements. The privilege of translation was sought. "The Heart of Alàstair" was soon to enliven palace boudoir and cotter's hearth in every European fatherland, including the Scandinavian. There was no fly in the ambrosia that Kistle Simmons, aged twenty-six, sedately digested.

His relatives and close friends were offensively drunken with pride, but journalistic visitors who wrote "Chats With Our Authors in Their Homes" cordially mentioned the young genius' modesty. It is true that Kistle did not like to talk of himself or to discuss his works. As he afterward told a girl, some subjects are too sacred. . . . He did, however, speak coldly of a war that broke out at

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about the time "Alastair" reached a sale of a hundred thousand copies. That war was unpopular with the whole Simmons family. They thought it was given altogether too much publicity.

Kistle Simmons had lived in his story as it was being written, and it remained actual to its author. It could not be precisely called a creation. It was, in fact, an assembled novel; and yet "Alastair," much more than Mill City, Pa., seemed lifelike to Kistle Simmons. For example, even at the uncongenial technical school to which Kistle had been forwarded at a hazard to study bridge-building during an unusually nebulous adolescence, he had been attended by an imaginary "man" with whose respectful humour he was much more concerned than with the computation of strains. All the male characters (except the servants) in "Alastair" had valets. Until royalties began to come in so handsomely, the Simmons family were served by one employee, always a mature German woman, who did the cooking; but they spoke of her as "the maid."

It was when one hundred and sixty thousand copies of "Alastair" had been sold that Kistle was swept into the love adventure that had so radical an influence on all his later work. To understand

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Kistle's conduct in that curious affair better than Mr. Clinefeldt did, it is necessary to bear in mind, first, that Mr. Clinefeldt was unlettered, and, second, that Kistle, at the time of the adventure, breathed only in the air of "Alastair." Students and devotees of Simmons will find old pleasures served anew in the pale sketch of "Alastair" here timorously attempted.

John Trevylian, the hero of the novel, was an American to the core. (During the earlier growth of the manuscript his name had been Alwyn Trevylian, but Kistle had supplanted Alwyn with John when he changed the heroine's given name from Yvonne to Alastair, as Alwyn made both hero and heroine begin with "Al" and did not seem very inventive. Besides, John was manlier, anyhow—and stronger.) John Trevylian was a straight, clean-limbed, smooth-shaven American—yes, always an American to the core—age six-and-twenty, with a square chin like his father's and grandfather's (the Trevylian chin) and deep-set eyes and an enigmatic smile which had puzzled a great many people in various peculiar parts of the world.

We find him wearing his riding togs, idling on the terrace of Arundel House, Lord Grydville's seat in

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Somerset, and flicking the ash from a monogrammed cigarette as he listens in a half reverie to Lord Grydville's Hungarian band playing wild, free fantasias in the Great Hall, where the other guests, including the Prime Minister, are having tea. John Trevylian, citizen of the world at large, as he half-laughingly dubbed himself, had retained few illusions; he had travelled much, seen much—and suffered much! This last, a shrewd observer would have learned from one glance at the bronzed, well-chiselled features, and the firm-knit figure whose muscles of steel were not wholly disguised even by the perfect coat built by Crisp, king of London tailors, who had once refused to build clothes for an Imperial Royalty on the ground that the latter would not know how to wear them.

Yes; John Trevylian had loved—and suffered! (Nowhere may we discover Kistle Simmons' subtlety better exemplified than in the wholly convincing intimation that, although John Trevylian had committed sins—not petty sins; never those, but Great Sins—he had never in his life deviated by a hair's breadth, or to the most sensitive criticism, from the strictest path of honour.) Women, it was whispered, had died for John Trevylian. And yet,

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if they had suffered for him, he had suffered more for them. All Rome rang with the story of his heroic protection of the Princess Traganza's reputation and the fair name of Casa Banuccio, a secret sacrifice which well-nigh cost him fame and fortune—ay, even life itself. And now, here at last on this stately terrace where the fragrance of his cigarette mingled with the scent of eglantine and the heavily drifting odour of Arundel House's roses (famous throughout all broad England) a girl's face danced before him on the breath of the clematis, and a girl's voice called to him mockingly in the lilt of the violins.

"Tush," he muttered, impatiently, flicking the ash from his now half-consumed cigarette. "One would think me as callow as when I pulled stroke on the 'Varsity, eight years ago. Heigho!" He laughed lightly. "What would Burgess think of me?"

Burgess was Trevylian's man.

Was it only a week ago that he, John Trevylian, had first seen his Lady-on-the-Bough? He had been hunting with the Arundel Hounds; had lost his way, and, much disgusted, was riding slowly homeward down a byroad, his square chin deep in his immaculate hunting stock, when a laughing voice

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had called to him, out of the clouds, apparently: "Whither away, Sir Knight of the Rueful Countenance?"

His first sensation was one of annoyance, but, glancing over a garden wall as he instinctively drew the rein of his thoroughbred, he looked for the first time into the violet velvet eyes of Alastair Boleyn—ay, and drank deep of them, too. She was cozily ensconced in an embowering oak in the midst of this shadowy, old-world garden, and, with a rare, old book with a deeply tooled binding held carelessly in her hand, had evidently been watching his chagrined approach with profound amusement. She wore a fresh primrose in her hair; another tip-tilted saucily at Trevylian from between her curved red lips. Trevylian laughingly swept her an extravagant salute with his hat.

"Why do you mock me, Lady-on-the-Bough?"

"Because I do choose, Sir Knight of the Rueful Countenance!"

The play of suchlike railleries between these two is continued for several chapters and proved interesting to about five hundred and thirty thousand eight hundred and twenty-nine people, estimated on the basis of three readers to each copy sold. And

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during the summer following the publication of "Alastair" numbers of undergraduates of both sexes practised Kistle Simmons' dialogue on deck, beach, and veranda.

Suspense is maintained, also, throughout this fond wooing, because of Trevylian's inability to discover who or what Alastair really was. Nobody knew anything about her and she would not tell even him her name, although he came back to the garden wall and talked with her every day. But he had plenty of names for her; he called her Lady-on-the-Bough, or Lady-in-the-Garden, or Primrose Lady, and, when he got to know her a little better, Ma'm-selle Frou-Frou, and Demoiselle-of-the-Silken Ankles. She always sat in the tree.

One day she was not there. A note was placed in his hand by a ragged boy who dived into the gorse and was gone. John Trevylian opened the note and (of course) read it. "Good-bye, brave Sir Knight. Our little comedy is over. Forget your Lady-on-the-Bough."

The next morning John Trevylian left Arundel House. Lady Galbraith (that strange woman who somehow made one think of a snake and shiver slightly in spite of her imperial beauty) is now

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introduced. That is, she is introduced to the reader, as Kistle Simmons' severest critic (if he ever has one) must admit that Simmons never descends to the banal device of having his characters introduced to one another. There is no instance of a formal or informal presentation in "Alastair" or any other of his books. That is one of this author's special charms against dulness. Lady Galbraith and John Trevylian met in a railway accident, which occurred on Trevylian's journey to town from Arundel House. She was pinned beneath the wreck, uninjured; Burgess obtained the means to extricate her and John Trevylian used it in such practical fashion that her first words to him were: "Mr.-Man-with-the-Saw——" He called her gallantly, "Mistress Dimples," until later in the story when he is forced by the disclosure of her real character to a stern "Lady Galbraith," merely.

A perfectly appointed brougham was waiting for Lady Galbraith when they reached Waterloo Station after the accident. John Trevylian drove home with her. She rang for tea and the housemaid who answered the bell in cap and apron was John's Lady-on-the-Bough, Alastair Boleyn. She uttered a sharp, choked cry, then, recovering herself, said

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coldly, yet with a certain wildness: "Yes, my lady," and retired. Trevylian muttered some excuse to Lady Galbraith, whose lovely but snakelike eyes divined the cause of his agitation, and rushed from the house.

He plunged for a time into dissipation, hoping to forget how cheaply he had held himself. "I, John Trevylian, caught in a flirtation with a lady's maid!" In the Row, at the opera, everywhere he saw the mocking eyes of Lady Galbraith fixed on him. One dawn he found Alastair Boleyn waiting for him on the sidewalk as he came out of the Russian Embassy after a night at baccarat, when, plunge as he would, he had won, and won, and won. Alastair no longer wore her housemaid's cap and apron. She was clad in magnificent sables; but of that his fevered eyes took no note. He would have passed her, but she laid a detaining hand on his arm. "Let me—let me explain," she quavered. "No, I beg you," he said simply, "I—I am unwell." And left her standing there.

He went to his chambers in Jermyn Street. And there, that night, among his old marbles, his Sheratons, and a few good things by Landseer and Rodin, he was found pacing restlessly up and down by his father, old Jack Trevylian.

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Old Jack was a grim old New Yorker who had lived much in court (kings', not law) and knew everybody worth knowing. He was a frightfully strong old man, muscularly; so strong that it often embarrassed him, because he would break cups and other things whenever he forgot how strong he was. He wore a fierce, closely trimmed white beard and was very direct. He was known everywhere by his sobriquet of "the Lion," though irreverently dubbed "the Pater" by his son.

"There is something you are trying to forget," said Old Jack, after one glance at the haggard face in Jermyn Street. "Tell Burgess to pack. We will go to Paris on the night express."

Two days later they were dining at Duval's, that last word of the *haut monde* in Parisian restaurants, with the Honourable Cedric Braylie, an Irish nobleman's younger son, commonly known as "the Stormy Petrel" and a good man to have at one's elbow in close fighting or in a pinch of any kind. "The Three," as the Parisians had learned to call old Jack, his son, and Cedric Braylie, were thoroughly mystified when a young Frenchman, the Marquis de Lagny, hitherto a stranger to them, rose from a near-by table and without provocation deliberately

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flicked John Trevylian's square chin with a *serviette*, adding a few sharp words of insult to make his deadly purpose clear.

John Trevylian was not the man to refuse such an opportunity; for the joy of fighting, it must be admitted, was deep-rooted in the Trevylian blood. The meeting took place on the terrace of a vacant château at Charenton, and several reviewers said it was as good as anything in "Sarascinesca." One peculiar incident threw a faint light on the motives of De Lagny in forcing the quarrel upon John Trevylian. The latter being an American, De Lagny (the best swordsman in Paris) little dreamed he would show any familiarity with the weapons chosen, which were swords; much less did he anticipate the masterly—almost indifferent—ease with which Trevylian handled his blade. Dismayed and hard-pressed, De Lagny, fighting like a demon but feeling his strength beginning to fail, attempted a foul stroke known as *il Presto di Caesar Borgia* and wounded Trevylian in the right forearm. The seconds, calling "Halt," immediately sprang in and knocked up the duelists' weapons. But as De Lagny's glittering point entered the sinewy wrist of John Trevylian, old Jack, "the Lion," heard a

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smothered outcry in a woman's voice, and glancing up sharply, was not too late to catch a glimpse of the stricken face of Lady Galbraith retiring from a dismantled window of the old château.

"Have no fear, madame," said the grim old man, fiercely, "my son fences as well with his left hand as with his right!"

John Trevylian's blood was up. He was in earnest now, and wary, alert, brilliant, fought with his left hand even more masterly than he had with his right. He merely toyed with the desperate Frenchman, and then, tiring of the game (having twice disarmed him and twice returned his sword) placed him *hors de combat* by a thrust in tierce through the thigh. "You would have it," he said, simply. "I am sorry." "The Lion" looked all through the old château but found nothing except a silver mirror, broken, a handkerchief, some gloves marked "G," and a gold cigarette case with Lady Galbraith's coat of arms in rubies. These he placed in his pocket.

"The Stormy Petrel" received a mysterious telegram at the breakfast following the duel, and left Paris without explaining where he was going. "The Lion" and John went to Trouville for the bathing season and the strange episode of the Breton smug-

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glers was the immediate sequence. Strolling on the beach at dusk, father and son were surprised by a party of fishermen, thrown into a smuggler's smack, and kidnapped. Treated with rough kindness, however, by their captors, they were finally landed at night on a bleak and little-known peninsula of the Scottish coast. The fishermen immediately put to sea again, but a well-known laugh rang out in the darkness and the Honourable Cedric Braylie stepped from behind a rock and greeted them merrily. It was he, "The Stormy Petrel," who had hired the smugglers to kidnap them and bring them to this wild peninsula, for he needed their help and there were reasons (which he begged them for the present not to ask) why their presence in this lonely spot should remain unknown. He asked them, simply, to trust him. Silently, father and son, each in turn, stepped forward and wrung "the Stormy Petrel's" hand. Then dim figures emerged from the gloomy mists, gillies who, "the Stormy Petrel" explained, were devoted to the cause that he served. He assigned one of the gillies as a guide to John Trevylian. There was a curious catch in Cedric Braylie's voice as he said:

"Jock Macallister, give your hand to Mr. Tre-

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vylian the younger. See that he does not stumble!" Jock Macallister did not speak, and, in the darkness, John Trevylian could make out only that his guide seemed young and agile, but the hand that was placed lightly in his sent a curious warmth through his frame. It was a strangely delicate hand for a gilly.

After many a detour among the precipitous cliffs and bracken, the party finally found itself standing before a long, low rambling house of immense size and great age, which, "the Stormy Petrel" told them in a cautious voice, was called "Auld Crags Manor." Soon after, John Trevylian and "the Lion" were seated before a roaring fire in a huge old fireplace, with a half-effaced escutcheon chiselled on the stone mantelpiece, a great punchbowl on the table, pipes lit, and the Honourable Cedric Braylie acting as host. Jock Macallister had disappeared.

"If ever man stood in need of staunch friends," said "the Stormy Petrel" as he filled a glass for old Jack, "I am that man." And his teeth met sharply as he cocked an eye at his two guests. "Stout friends, I need, with no scruples against good, honest fighting. I cannot tell you all, as yet, but you know me too well to think I would ask you

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to do anything that would shame you. You shall know in good time. For the present I must only inform you that it has become necessary to secrete a certain Person, whom I cannot now name to you, from certain Other Persons. These Other Persons have it in their power to do That Person grave injury. That Person is now in this house, but will be compelled to remain secluded, even from you. It is true that I am asking you to ally yourselves with me on the illegal side of the affair, because the law is with That Person's enemies." (There was a gleam of laughter in the speaker's loyal Irish eyes.) "These Other Persons, in fact, are determined to gain possession of That Person's person, and Auld Crags Manor is at this very moment practically in a state of siege. If the besiegers once obtain admission, That Person is lost. That is as much as I am permitted to tell you. Is it enough? Old friends, will you stand by me in this, my hour of need?"

It was then that "the Three," once more clasping hands, swore that great oath that they kept so well, to defend Auld Crags Manor—yes, to the end!

It was late on the following afternoon when John Trevylian caught a glimpse of a trim-built youth hastily crossing the courtyard of Auld Crags,

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followed by several gillies armed with cudgels, and evidently returning from some scouting expedition. With an odd thrill he felt inexplicably that the face of this handsome boy had appeared to him at some former crisis in his life, though when and where he could not remember. The pouting lips, the abundant bronze-gold hair waving under the jaunty cap, the violet velvet eyes, the small waist, the high-arched feet and slender ankles fully revealed by the Highland kilts—the entire figure, in good truth, struck him as unusual for a "Hieland Laddie." And yet to John Trevylian it seemed strangely familiar. Obeying a sudden impulse, he clutched one of the gillies by the arm. "Who *is* that?" he demanded huskily.

The gilly touched his forelock. "Milord, 'tis only Jock Macallister," he muttered. "Me ain brither, too, he is, saving your worship's presence," he added, as if feeling the need of corroborative details; and then, hastily but obsequiously releasing himself from the other's grasp, he glided silently into the Manor.

The closing episodes of "Alastair" are indicated by the chapter headings. "The Siege of Auld Crags," "The Night Attack," "The Fight on the

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Peninsula," "Hard Pressed," "The Stormy Petrel Explains," and, "As the Law Ordains." The siege of Auld Crags had grown daily more sinister, urged on by the surrounding cordon of local constables—half-wild brutes they were, in that lonely region—and a gang of London criminals brought thither and officered by hired detectives. At last, provisions exhausted, the defenders decided upon a sally, hoping to reach the coast and be taken off by Cedric's friends, the Breton smugglers. Headed by John Trevylian, "the Lion" and "the Stormy Petrel," they dashed into the mêlée, the doughty Three, with mighty strokes of their cudgels, laying all low before them.

They had almost won through, when John Trevylian discovered Jock Macallister fighting by his side. Suddenly Jock was confronted by a slender but athletic figure in the uniform of a French officer. Something flashed in the air and Jock fell, a thin line of scarlet on his white temple, and at sight of the lad's blood John Trevylian, raging like an untamed tiger, went baresark. Throwing away his cudgel, he muttered the old Trevylian battlecry, which his father's father had taught him in boyhood, and, depending only on those natural

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Anglo-Saxon weapons, his two strong hands, he went right into the thick of it. His adversaries seemed fairly to melt before him (not once, from cover to cover, does Kistle Simmons split an infinitive) and in ten seconds he fought his way to the French officer, who had sought shelter in the rear after wounding Jock.

"At last!" thundered Trevylian, his right hand raised to fell the cowering Gaul.

"Nevaire, m'sieu!" cried an incisive voice, and De Lagny stepped gallantly between the two. "I am your enemy, m'sieu'," he said, simply. "But I admire you too greatly to see you, even though unwittingly, strike a woman. I save you, m'sieu', from ze remorse you would some day experience, m'sieu'!"

With a recoil of horror John Trevylian recognized Lady Galbraith in the boots and dolman of the French Guards. She fainted, and at the same instant there rang out a sharp report, and Trevylian felt a stinging pain in his left shoulder. The constables and London roughs, fearful lest their prey escape them, had summoned gunpowder to their aid. The revolver speaks again. And now, one of the gillies is down. Stubbornly, inch by inch, the defenders of Auld Crags are beaten back, until, still fighting

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tooth and nail, but caught like rats in a trap, as "the Lion," swearing fearfully is heard to mutter, they are forced to seek refuge in the Manor once more. John Trevylian, bearing the inanimate form of Jock Macallister on his uninjured shoulder, is the last to enter.

The gillies again barred the doors and made the defense temporarily secure with hastily constructed barricades, while Trevylian tenderly deposited upon a divan his precious burden—now doubly precious, for Jock, opening those eyes of violet velvet, half-whispered and half-sobbed, with slowly returning consciousness:

"And so, though once you would not speak to me, yet at the last you have fought for me, Sir Knight of the Rueful Countenance!" And as the light of recognition broke upon John Trevylian's face and he uttered a glad, choking cry, she blushed a little and rearranged her kilts somewhat, for her wound was but a scratch and her true knight knew Alastair Boleyn at last. Then deftly and daintily she dressed his own wound, while over and over he murmured:

"Demoiselle! My little Frou-Frou! My Lady-on-the-Bough!"

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Nevertheless their situation was desperate. The "Petrel," while superintending the barricades, hastily explained matters to the Trevylians. "That Person" was none other than Alastair Boleyn, whose history Cedric Braylie (her cousin and sincere friend from childhood) now cleared up. Lady Galbraith was Alastair's half-sister, both having had the same father, the Earl of Garth, who had been celebrated as the proudest and most whimsical man in England. By his will the great estate had all been left to Alastair, with the curious proviso—characteristic of the Earl, however—that if she ever entered domestic service the property should revert to her older sister Lady Galbraith. The latter, cleverly concealing this from Alastair (after the Earl's death) had made her believe herself penniless, and had induced her to act as lady's maid, until sought out and informed of the truth by other relatives and friends of the late Earl, among whom was "the Stormy Petrel."

Lady Galbraith then brought suit, claiming that Alastair had taken service as a domestic, but this could not be proven except by the testimony of Alastair herself. On that account the devoted "Petrel" had disguised her as "Jock" and brought her to this

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lonely spot, where her identity was soon discovered. Hence the siege. If the constables could effect an entrance, they would serve the writ, hale her to court, she would be compelled to testify that she had been a servant—for Alastair Boleyn could not lie—and thus not only lose the vast Garth estate, but also her social position, now, since her rescue from Lady Galbraith, the highest in England.

"That is all. Perhaps I should have told you before," said Cedric, simply.

As "the Petrel's" voice ceased to be heard, Alastair whispered brokenly to Trevylian:

"Do you despise me *now?* What was I to do? I did not know! I did not know!"

Her Knight of the Rueful Countenance only stroked the bronze-gold hair. No other answer was needed.

The heavy blows of a tree trunk used as a battering-ram upon the outer doors of Auld Crags roused them to the hopelessness of their position. But "the Lion," with his inimitable coolness, was so little disturbed by the tumult without that he picked up a musty old book of Scotch Law from a table and began imperturbably to read. Suddenly he sprang to his feet with a violent exclamation.

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Eagerly questioned as to the cause of his agitation at such a moment, he read aloud a clause from the law of Scotland, which "the Petrel," who had been a barrister, recollected was still in force, though seldom used. It was to the effect that a married woman could not be compelled to testify to her own detriment without the consent of her husband. All eyes then turned to Alastair. She blushed anew, and hung that little head.

"But," she said, simply, "I am not married."

"The Lion's" great laugh thundered out on the still air of the room. "In Scotland," he shouted, "it is only necessary for a Lad and a Maid to declare before a witness that they are man and wife. That is a legal marriage. And," here he bent a merry glance upon his son, "I think I could find the Lad."

"And I the Maid," laughed "the Stormy Petrel," placing his cousin's hand in John Trevylian's sinewy clasp. "Tear away the barricades, gillies. Open wide the doors of Auld Crags. We will make your very enemies the witnesses!"

And as the elated gillies sprang to obey, John Trevylian whispered to his hard-won bride: "Alastair, my Maid! Lady-on-the-Bough. My little

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Ma'mselle Frou-Frou—*Jock!* Turn that dainty head to me. For I want it—here!"

And he touched his breast.

That is the brief and inadequate outline of Kistle Simmons' first novel. Icily analytical, one finds some little extravagance here and there, even a slight forcing of episode; but as the publishers' own magazine set forth, Kistle Simmons was "too thorough a master craftsman, not to know *how* to tell *any* story well." The enthusiasm of the book's reception has been indicated; elaboration of the subject infringes upon the history of *belles lettres*, though a final detail is permissible.

Less than a month after the publication of "Alastair," Kistle Simmons, returning to Mill City from a business talk with his publishers in New York, found four people, three ladies and a drummer, reading his novel in a single parlour-car. With modest benevolence he smilingly revealed his identity and signed three of these books for three pleased owners, the three ladies. The drummer, however, to Kistle's intense amusement, did not understand at all; he seemed befogged and openly annoyed, and refused the proffered autograph with something

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like heat. He had borrowed the book from his niece, he said, and he was darn-sure she didn't want anybody's name in it but her own, let alone a stranger's. All the way to Mill City he kept glancing distrustfully, over the top of the book, at Kistle.

The publishers of "Alastair" had urged the young novelist to begin another manuscript at once, and Kistle, readily acquiescing, prepared himself for the conception of his second novel. The idea for "Alastair"—as he always mentioned to interviewers—had "come" to him during an early morning stroll in the country. Consistently, therefore, he now began to rise about dawn, and, taking a street-car to the end of the line, walked for an hour or so, to afford the idea for his next book an opportunity of coming to him. For a time the idea, wherever it was, lurked reluctant, though he walked persistently, haunting the sunrise and keeping his mind open. He allowed no favouritism in the choice of a subject to incline him this way or that; he had, however, a growing impression that the forthcoming novel would be "along the lines of 'Alastair'," though even more romantic, perhaps more ethereal, with a "slightly hotter love interest," and a heroine, if possible, even archer and more

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merrily provocative of winsome railleries than Alastair Boleyn. But, of course, he did not know what the story would be. It had not "come." He continued his walks, keeping his consciousness passive and receptive.

Then, one daybreak, he happened upon something unexpected and strange—and dazzling. He had wandered down a byroad from the Pike, down a lane from the byroad, and was passing (quite unconcernedly) a little orchard behind a large new house. All round the house the lawn was neatly mown, but in the orchard the grass was long, almost knee-high. It was fragrant and dewy, glittering with myriads of little white diamonds in the sunrise, and dancing through it, with strange steps of unearthly grace, unshod and unhosed, Kistle Simmons beheld a lovely girl. Her hair, superbly red, blew from her shoulders on the keen breeze; and, over other and indefinite garments, she wore a gabardine of flame-coloured silk, which she held gathered above the wet reach of the tall grass. And, all unaware of a stranger's gaze, she crooned eerily to herself in a low-pitched monotone. Her eyes were bent upon the feet that flashed through the watery green grass like white shuttles. She came toward the enthralled

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watcher, dancing nearer and nearer. He leaned upon the picket fence, a slow smile, half-tender, half-bantering, parting his lips. She was within ten feet of him when she looked up, saw him, and stopped electrically in an attitude of instantaneous petrifaction. Her startled eyes—the eyes of a dryad—were blue.

He smiled a little more; he spoke to her, keeping his eyes fixed on hers. "No," he said, quizzically. "I shouldn't call them violet, precisely. Because they're *not*, you know. I believe we shall have to say that they are iridescent turquoise, O Lady-of-the-Morning-Dew!"

The lovely girl became even lovelier. Her face flamed brighter than her silken robe; almost as red, I wis, as her hair. She made one little consonant sound, like the beginning of a word, then ran. She trailed her things regardlessly. She was but a fiery streak, and ended in a flash and an explosion as she shot up the kitchen steps and banged the door behind her—but not before the ringing laugh that Kistle Simmons sent after her had sounded in her ears, with his pursuing cry:

"Anon, my Lady-of-the-Orchard-Dews! I'll come this way *again!*"

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That was a radiant day for Simmons. It is not every novelist who is given a chapter from one of his own romances to live. Through hours bright with the lingering excitement of his adventure, a pair of iridescent turquoise eyes beamed upon him, half-mockingly, half-tenderly. The vamoose of the lady did not disturb him at all; it was as he would have had it. For women scurry, sometimes, when they cannot resist. That arrow-flight to the kitchen pleased him even better than if she had paused to answer him, beginning, "O Mr.-Man-Leaning-on-the Fence——" That would come.

He slept little that night, but it was a happy insomnia. He rose while it was still dark, and dressed far more fastidiously than upon the preceding morning. Indeed, in new knickerbockers and plaited coat he looked not unlike his illustrator's idea of John Trevylian. No Lady-of-the-Dews was visible when he reached the spot behind the orchard, whence he had yesterday beheld her; but he was little dismayed, for the sun yet sat upon the horizon.

He disposed himself serenely upon a rock near some bushes close to the picket fence, and, lighting a cigarette, carelessly flicked from it the ash—as soon

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as there was one. He waited. She would come. He knew it.

Presently he laughed a low laugh to himself. For she came.

She wore the same costume as on the day before and had made the same omissions, though the latter were not apparent until she reached the tall grass of the orchard. She appeared upon a path which led round the house from the front door; she came thoughtfully and as if somewhat troubled. A faint uneasiness was manifest, not only in her expression but in her very walk, and in many little turns of the head as she glanced up and down the by-road and then up and down the lane, and over her shoulder in other directions, as if in expectancy of something distasteful. Had she cause for *fear?* It was not impossible that she was being watched from the house. By whom?

Kistle, wondering, sat motionless; and her iridescent turquoise eyes failed to detect his presence. By and by he would speak to her, not now. She would not turn away this time. Once more he laughed softly to himself.

Reassured by the morning silence, she entered the long grass of the orchard, and, preserving her

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draperies (as yesterday) from its dampness, began to move in a dance of wild, strange grace. Her small feet twinkled in rapid succession above the grass, like feet in the high-step of a cake-walk, while her shoulders swayed to the rhythm of the curious monotone she hummed—a reiterant, breathy, sing-song murmur of numbers, evoking in the mind of the spellbound listener the monotonous but unbearably stirring ululations of the Eastern music he had heard in dramas of the Orient. Over and over she chanted the same little numbers, as she swayed and high-stepped, crossing and recrossing the orchard in this most bizarre and fascinating performance ever beheld by the eye of man. At last she halted, beautifully flushed and panting, within a few steps of where she had stopped the day before, and as close to Kistle Simmons. And at that he rose, and, laughing lightly, bowed very low before her.

"A thousand salaams, O Maid-of-Bagdad," he said. "Thy servant salutes thee. I will bring thee ten thousand perfumes in a sandal-wood box with chasings of silver, O Fatimah-of-the-Alabaster-Ankles."

He had prophesied rightly; this time the lovely girl did *not* run away. Neither did she return his rallying smile; but she spoke. She said: "What?"

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"Maid-of-Bagdad," he returned, continuing to laugh whimsically, "thou art made of white marble. All of white marble. Thou art white and fair and nimble——"

The lovely girl turned from him and took four decisive steps toward the house.

"Desert not this poor slave," laughed Kistle, extending his arms toward her beseechingly. "Else will I pour dust upon my head, rend my garments, and beg for dates in the bazaar. Stay, O Pearl of Persia, O Pearl above Price, to delight mine eyes dance once more. I pray thee, dance, and I——"

"Mr. Clinefeldt!" shouted the lovely girl in a loud, summoning voice. "Mr. *Clinefeldt!*" Instantly there burst out of the kitchen door a large man in his shirtsleeves, a thick, white cloud of lather obscuring his cheeks and chin. He was about sixty, but sudden and big.

"Here's that fellow I told you about," shouted the girl. "He's insultin' me again!"

It fell from a clear sky. Nothing led up to it gradually. Nothing checked the sickening descent of it. Nothing mitigated the strangling awfulness of it. Kistle Simmons, utterly well-intentioned,

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smiling, debonair, confident of charming with winsome raillery, had to take it right in the face. It landed full, a splashing horror.

"He's tryin' to talk to me!" shouted the lovely girl. Kistle Simmons stepped back from the fence, staring incredulously at the oncoming Mr. Clinefeldt.

"He tried to pick me up," she bayed.

"You are mistaken," Kistle managed to say, and, with a mistaken effort to continue in character, "O Maid——"

"She haint no sech a things mistaken," volunteered an incredibly spiteful coloured woman, projecting unexpectedly from the kitchen window. "Lam 'im good, Mist' Clinefeldt; he's a little liah!"

As nightmare approaches the riveted dreamer, came Mr. Clinefeldt toward the fated Simmons. Mr. Clinefeldt was fury-red above his lather. Although merely a retired glue manufacturer, he was of dumbfounding proportions.

"Bus' him open, Mr. Clinefeldt," shrieked the appalling negress, with insane rancor. "I seen him sneak 'long de road an' hide in 'em bushes an' peek froo de fence-pickers whiles yo' wife uz a-doin' 'em Dutch he'lf-exercises!"

"I didn't," gulped Kistle.

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"You did!" said the Maid-of-Bagdad. "You did, too, you masher!"

Mr. Clinefeldt opened the back gate and debouched upon the lane—rapidly. His manner and appearance did not encourage a hope that he would be capable of understanding the spirit of banter in which Kistle had addressed the lovely girl. That *bonhomie*, that lightness of touch, which had so large a responsibility for the popularity of "Alastair," one felt would be incomprehensible to Mr. Clinefeldt. One could explain the incident, indeed, with rather more optimism, to a charging rhinoceros.

"Lam 'im good!" repeated the inimical cook, vociferously. "You done had hard enough work to coax yo' wife take 'at cure. She quit it sho' ef you 'low riffraff come spyin' on 'er an say what *he* say. He call 'er ole maid, an' make wuss talk' n 'at, too! I heerd 'im. Tol' 'er she 'uz all white". . . . She continued with unthinkable interpretations. Our race must expiate the crime of purloining her ancestors from the Congo.

Mr. Clinefeldt was quite close to Kistle. The fact that the lovely girl was his third wife and forty years his junior did not sensibly modify his dreadfully apparent purpose.

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"You keep away from me," urged Kistle, backing. "You're an old man and I don't want to hurt——"

"Hit him, Jake," said the Lady.

"You bet I'll hit him!" roared Mr. Clinefeldt. "But first"—he curved the palm and fingers of his right hand concavely and used them as a scoop upon his densely lathered countenance—"first I'm a-goin' to wash his mouth with soap. You stand there, watch me." Mrs. Clinefeldt obeyed.

It was a great morning, also, for the coloured woman. Twenty minutes later, her shoulders still heaving in the throes of an unsullied joy, she brushed the dust of the lane from her master's legs with a whiskbroom. "Folks may tell you you's ole in yeahs, Mist' Clinefeldt," she said, with what remained of her voice, "but you suttinly got the stren'th in yo' han's—yes, an' feet!—of Samson of ole."

Kistle Simmons' second novel published the following spring amazed the reviewers by its contrast to "Alastair," and gave the world some idea of the startling range of imagination possessed by this novelist. The book was compared in corpuscles, virility, and the strength of its meat for strong men,

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to the novels of Zola, of Frank Norris, of Dostoiëwski, of Theodore Dreiser—to the dramas of Strindberg and Brieux.

The first chapter is the pleasantest in the book. It begins:

"Krug Hopjeece, the refuse contractor, sat in a ten-cent restaurant in a Pittsburg slum. Hopjeece breathed heavily as he ate, the exhalations of his breath gathering in a thick vapour on the window-pane. From upstairs came the shrieking of a child. It was being beaten. Hopjeece ate. With his horrible hairy hand he lifted the soup bone, dripping with grease, from the bowl, tearing the shreds of meat with his strong teeth and with his horrible black and broken nails. A rat, half-stifled with bubonic germs, crawled across his feet. Hopjeece ate. The soup bone had been thrown away at the packing-house. Hopjeece ate."

It was called "Sewage."

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MARJORIE JONES' PICNIC

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MARJORIE JONES' PICNIC

THE surest of all weather signs is this: when boys are interested in the weather on Wednesday, anxious about it on Thursday, and worried about it on Friday, either a circus or some sort of a picnic is set for Saturday.

This time, approaching the last Saturday in May, the meteorological observations of Penrod Schofield and Samuel Williams foretokened a picnic. Marjorie Jones, the prettiest little girl in all the world, had invited her friends (particularly including Penrod) to straw-ride out to her uncle's farm, there to disport themselves for the afternoon, and then straw-ride home again. No possible doubt was left in any mind that Refreshments were intended, and, on Saturday morning, Penrod and Sam had absolute proof of what was in store. They were invited to be at Marjorie's at half-past one; and as they sat in Penrod's front yard at about eleven, doing nothing whatever except looking forward to the great times ahead, they saw a caterer's wagon pass—a vehicle

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known to them as "Beck's ice-cream wagon." The driver wore a new straw hat and had just lit a large cigar. Here were overwhelming significances: a freshly lit cigar in the mouth of a driver may well mean that his drive will be a long one, and Who might better wear a new hat than a man taking ice-cream to a Party? Penrod and Sam did not deliberately observe, deduct, and apply, but they felt these things. At their age, nutrition is still the strongest instinct.

"I bet you," said Sam, "I bet you he's on his way *out there!*"

And the tone of his voice, as he said, "*out there!*" was that in which a confident Wall Street operator can easily be imagined to pronounce the words, "*Forty Million Dollars!*"

"Yes, sir!" cried Penrod.

Then, overcome by the future, both of them were unable to restrain their feelings; they rolled in the grass, shouting; they waved their feet in the air.

"Yay!" Sam shouted.

"Whee-ee!" So Penrod expressed his ecstasy.

There was nothing but sunshine in their world; the morning air stirred upon them, warm yet lively, and they had not learned that the hour before the

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Party may be merrier than the Party itself. Very likely, therefore, they were the two happiest creatures on the earth just then, and certainly their behaviour indicated such a probability. They rose to gyrate, to hop, to leap in the air, to chuckle, to bellow uncouthly, and to prance grotesquely. They exchanged buffets and even kicks of congratulation.

"Yay!" shouted Sam finally. "I'm goin' home to get dressed up!" And he galloped out of the gate, making it evident that his departure was equestrian.

"So'm I!" Penrod called after him. "Whoa, you Bill! Git up there now!"

He entered the house in a manner so heartily inspired by that of his friend, it was fortunate that no one had a headache. Indoors, he was unable to dismount, even throughout the processes of a Party toilet, but remained upon horseback, to the frequent inconvenience of his mother and sister, who felt called upon to assist him for their own credit.

Sam came by for him at one o'clock, and they cantered down the street to where two big wagons, filled with straw and decorated with bunting, stood before Marjorie Jones' sacred gate. Then, for a time, both boys became hushed and polite; in fact,

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they remained in this sweet condition all the way to the farm, Penrod sitting by Marjorie, who was naturally a little self-important, and Sam sitting by Mabel Rorebeck, who seemed resigned to that neighbourliness.

But when the farm was reached and the children had jumped down from the wagons, the time had come, of course, for all the boys to show what bold stuff they were made of. Within ten minutes after their arrival, Penrod fell out of a tree to the pleasant accompaniment of shrieks and commiseration from Marjorie and other surprised little girls. They were not horrified, because the tree was only an apple-tree and Penrod fell from its lowest branch. What was additionally reassuring, several unimpressed boys instantly accused him of doing it on purpose, and his denials were feeble. In fact, the performance was almost a fiasco; but he presently redeemed it—at least in the eyes of Marjorie—by some grandeurs in the presence of a calf.

This calf was standing in an enclosure in the barn-lot, and it frightened Marjorie by approaching the fence as she passed and suddenly shaking its head to get rid of a fly. Marjorie supposed the action to be a threatening gesture personal to herself,

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and she jumped and screamed. Without hesitation, Penrod climbed the fence, leaped straight down into the enclosure, not three feet from the calf, and laughed scornfully as Marjorie besought him to return.

"Fuff!" he sneered (at the calf, not at Marjorie). "Get away from here, you ole calf, you!"

And as the calf extended its nose toward him curiously, Penrod slapped that nose with his open hand.

"Hop, you ole calf, you!" he commanded. Then, with other contemptuous blows, he began to chase the creature about the enclosure, protracting this recreation until a man's voice was heard hoarsely shouting from the dark interior of the barn:

"Here, you! You leave that calf alone!" Whereupon Penrod rejoined Marjorie, feeling that he had appeared to advantage.

"*They* can't hurt you much," he informed her, alluding to calves. "Not if you go right up *to* 'em and kind of slap 'em on the nose like I do."

"Ooh!" she cried. "I *couldn't!*" And her wonderful eyes showed what she thought of him.

"Not girls," he said graciously. "Girls wouldn't be s'posed to."

The children trooped over the place, exploring

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and skylarking, a jolly band running everywhere, and looking, at a little distance, like confetti thrown on the breeze. Presently they all lined up against the hither side of a rail fence, staring earnestly; for beyond was a two-acre lot of dried and cracked mud, pitted and wavy, but at about the middle of it there remained a black wallow, still wet, wherein reposed a ponderous sow and nine pigs. Gazing upon these, the whole Party paused, fascinated. Penrod climbed to the top of the fence and sat there.

"You better get down off that fence, Penrod," Georgie Bassett warned him. "When they've got pigs, everybody knows they're the most dangerous animals there is. If that ole mother pig ever looked around once and took after you——"

"That's nothin'," Maurice Levy interrupted. "That ole thing couldn't run all the way here before you could jump down from the fence, could she? I ain't afraid to get up on the fence myself."

"Neither am I," said Sam. And he and Maurice forthwith mounted to sit beside Penrod, whereupon most of the other boys also climbed the fence and began to shout tauntingly at the mother and her brood.

"Please come down, Penrod!" Marjorie pleaded.

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"That man in the barn said nobody better go near the pigs, and said that old one was bad as he could be. I heard of a little boy that was killed by one once, and he ate him up, too. Please come down!"

Penrod laughed heartily.

"Fuff! I wouldn't be afraid to walk right up to that ole thing," he said. "If I *felt* like it, I'd walk right up and slap her on the nose."

But the boast produced a poor effect. All the other boys shouted in mockery; they howled, echoing in many keys Penrod's unfortunate provisional clause, "If I *felt* like it," and Penrod became pink.

"I would, too!" he cried.

"Yes, you would!" they shouted. "If you *felt* like it!" And Master Roddy Bitts was fain to climb down from the fence and attempt a somersault to assuage pangs of laughter.

"I would!" the badgered Penrod insisted, though he, too, had heard the story of the little boy who was eaten. "I wouldn't be afraid to, *any* day. I'd do it right now, if—if——"

He paused, but the injurious chorus loudly finished the sentence for him—"If you *felt* like it."

"I wouldn't be afraid to push a house over," said Maurice Levy, and added, "if I *felt* like it."

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"I'd go right up to a nelephunt!" shouted Sam, making himself heard over the shrill riot that rewarded Maurice's waggishness. "I'd go right up to a nelephunt and twist his ole trunk—if I *felt* like it!"

Other wits declared themselves in like manner, describing dangers they would confront—if they *felt* like it—and Penrod began to see that the hateful clause threatened to become his badge of shame for the whole day, and perhaps permanently. Somehow, it was fastening itself upon him horribly; and the more he vociferated, "I would, too!" the less such defense availed him. He was outshouted and howled down by force of numbers. All in a moment, he fell from the position of one having prestige among his fellows to that of the butt of their derision. He was the loudest yet the lowest there, a joke—all on account of a few simple words. And with Marjorie Jones looking on!

"Yes, you would!" rang the horrid cry. "You would, if you *felt* like it!"

The desperate boy slowly climbed down into the enclosure and walked toward the family in the wallow.

The mockers were stilled, but Marjorie cried loudly:

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"Oh, Penrod, come back! Penrod, *please* come back!"

On went the rash Penrod.

The mother of the pig family, already annoyed by the unusual shouting from the fence, lifted her head and looked inscrutably at the slowly approaching visitor. She perceived that he was a stranger, not formidable in size and of unknown purpose, and she was not alarmed. However, the better to study him, she raised the forepart of her ponderous person, without disturbing the rest of her or her family, and, simultaneously with this action, she uttered a few guttural monosyllables.

Penrod stopped short. It seemed to him that this mud lot was vast, and that he was all alone in the middle of it; the fence seemed a long, long way behind him.

But the instant he stopped, unbearable taunts began to pipe from that quarter.

"Yay! Said he'd slap her right on the nose—if he *felt* like it!"

"*Please* come back, Penrod!"

"Oh, he *will!*" Thus Marjorie was unkindly reassured.

Penrod advanced again, even more slowly than

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before; and he assumed what he intended to be a placative expression.

"Piggy, piggy?" he said, in an inquiring tone. "Nice ole piggy? *I* won't hurt you, piggy."

All at once, the sow decided that it would be better if this boy went away. She rose aft, as well as forward, upsetting the pigs, who protested passionately, and her intense gaze became disquieting. At the same time, she lifted her head and operated her nostrils in a manner strange and new to Penrod.

"Piggy, piggy?" he quavered. "*I* won't hurt you."

This friendly promise appeared to decide a question in the mind of the mother of the family. With the frantic voices of her offspring sounding in her ears, she advanced a few steps toward Penrod, and then, as he turned uncertainly away, she increased her speed surprisingly and charged.

Penrod gulped once, and ran for the fence, whence came shrieks both of fright and derision. But, closely pursued, he felt that the animal would be upon him if he paused to climb the fence, which was much too high to be either jumped or vaulted, and, before he reached it, he swerved, and ran toward the other side of the lot. The sow was not far behind him, and, though it would be an exaggeration to

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say that Penrod "gave himself up for lost," his state of mind was lamentable. "Help!" he shrieked, undoubtedly with some hoarseness. "Help! Help! Help! *Hay-ulp!*"

Thereupon, a small farm-boy, in blue overalls, blue shirt, and broken-coned old straw hat of volcanic shape—a stocky, sunburned little boy, a full head shorter than Penrod—this boy appeared over the top of the farther fence. He jumped down into the pig-lot, picked up a stick from the ground in a businesslike manner, and, running toward the sow, intervened between her and the fleeing Penrod.

"You git back to yer pigs!" he said.

The sow halted, turned, received a rap from the stick, and thoughtfully rejoined her family.

"Come on," the boy said to Penrod; "I'll take you back to where all them other children is. *She* won't do nothin' to you long as she sees you're with me."

Thus, under escort, the panting and solemn Penrod returned to the Party, and his soul was disturbed by misgivings and uncomfortable presages.

"Yay, Penrod!" Sam bellowed, as his friend and the little guardian farm-boy climbed the fence. "Why didn't you *feel* like it?"

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There followed a vicious explosion of delight.

Hootings and further derisive inquiries arose from the populace, and one cry, prevailing over others, came to be the favourite: "*Nice* ole piggy, piggy! *Dear* ole piggy, piggy! *I* won't hurt you, piggy!"

But most darkening of all to Penrod was the curiosity and admiration concerning his preserver, especially among the girls.

"Who *is* that brave little boy?"

"It's Freddie," explained Marjorie, proud of her possessions. "He's the tenants' boy. You see, my uncle owns this farm"—this was information which she seemed never to tire of offering—"and the people that live here are his tenants, you see. Well, this boy belongs to them. He's my uncle's tenants' boy, and his name's Freddie. Isn't he the bravest boy you ever *saw!*"

Then something sharper than a serpent's tooth nipped the vitals of Penrod, for Marjorie took her uncle's tenants' Freddie by the hand.

"Come on, Freddie," she said winningly; "we're going to play black-man, and we want you to play with us. You haf to play with us all the rest of the afternoon, and when refreshments come you haf to have some, too. Come on!"

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Still holding his hand, she ran with him, leading the Party to the broad, open yard before the farm-house.

"Come ahead, Penrod!" Sam cried, looking back over his shoulder. "What you want to hang around there for? You might as well come—there isn't any pigs around in front where we're goin'."

Others looked back to where the morose Penrod lingered.

"Come on, ole piggy!" they shouted. "*We* won't hurt you! Help! Help! Help!"

"Shut *up !*" he bellowed.

After a time he followed, but halted and sat in bitterness upon a horse-trough, not joining the game. Anon, one of the players would fling a jibe at him, or several might cry, from the midst of things:

"*Nice* ole piggy! *I* won't hurt you! Help! Help Help!"

Marjorie stood with the odious Freddie in the centre of the open space. They were "black-men."

"What you goin' do when the black-man comes?" they called.

"Run right through,
'Like we all-waze do!"

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But Maurice Levy and Sam Williams altered the question and response.

"What you goin' to do when the mother pig comes?" Sam shouted, when he was made a "black-man." And Maurice replied:

"Run forty-five miles and get under the bed.
Help! Help! Help! Go bring little Fred!"

Penrod turned his back, and, after a little while, the jibers, in the excitement of black-man and other games, apparently forgot him. He continued to sit upon the rim of the horse-trough, a detached figure of gloom, no longer seeming to belong to the Party; and his expression (invisible to the merry-makers) was lonely but vindictive. His hands were in his trouser pockets; he dug his heels into the ground, and frowned at a glowing dandelion near by, finding its cheerfulness mysteriously hateful. And once, when a loud burst of happy shouting came to his ears from the field of play—"Freddie's it!" "Marjorie caught Freddie!" "He's it!"—Penrod removed his right hand from his pocket and made a hostile gesture, dealing a blow upon the air.

"There," he muttered, "how did you like that one? You say much, and I'll give you one right on the snoot!" Unhappily, such were precisely his words.

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A discreditable symptom of his present condition was the sheer ingratitude of it. All his bitterness concentrated not upon the jibers and tormentors but upon the capable and stocky little Freddie, who had done him only the greatest kindness. It was audible how increasingly popular the farm-boy became.

"No; let *Freddie* choose which side he'll be on!" "Let Freddie choose up with Marjorie!" "*I'm* goin' to be on Freddie's side!" "Oh, *Freddie*, choose *me!*" "*Please* choose me, Freddie!"

The venomous air was full of Freddie.

"There!" muttered Penrod, and he struck another blow. "I guess that'll show you!"

Without doubt, it was the imagined nose of his preserver which received the dolorous stroke.

Penrod suffered most hotly under what he felt to be the injustice of popular opinion. Of *course*, the farm-boy wasn't afraid of that ole sow and could drive her around the lot whenever he pleased. That was because he *knew* her, and she knew him. Penrod's little old dog Duke, at home, had sometimes frightened grown men, such as drivers of delivery wagons, but Penrod would rush straight upon the belligerent dog, and Duke would cower

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and run. If that little country smarty ever came into town and tried to fool around good ole Duke any—well, he'd *see!*

And then Penrod's fancies grew more grandiloquent. Next summer vacation, he would, in some manner, obtain a pair of lion cubs, and perhaps some young tigers and panthers. He would train them constantly, and grow up with them; then he would bring them out to this Party—there was an inconsistency here which he did not pause to observe—and after showing how *he* behaved with them ("Sit up on your hind legs, you ole lion you! Get out o' my way, you tigers!") he would invite little Freddie into the cage with him.

"Come on, Freddie; I won't let 'em do anything to you much. Well, why don't you come? You don't want to? Why, that's funny! I should think you'd just love to!"

And he writhed with acid laughter.

Now a forerunner of Refreshments appeared. Large pitchers of lemonade and trays of glasses were brought from the farmhouse and set upon a table under the trees, whither the thirsty children rushed, swarming. But the lonely figure on the horse-trough did not move.

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"Come, Penrod!" called Mrs. Jones, the mother of Marjorie. "Come get some lemonade!"

Still he remained aloof, his back turned, and replied with a brief shake of the head; whereupon, in pity, she filled a glass and brought it to him.

"Here, Penrod," she said, smiling; "you drink this, and come and join the games. They won't tease you any more."

He kept his eyes upon his slowly moving feet as they dug up the surface of the ground.

"I don't care what they do," he said. "They never teased *me* any."

"Well, then, won't you drink this lemonade?"

"'Nt want 'ny, thank you."

"You mustn't let a little thing like their chaffing you spoil your afternoon, Penrod," she said. "Think how you tease *them* sometimes. Do take the lemonade."

He wanted the lemonade; he thirsted for it—and yet he was unable to take the glass from her extended hand. Some inexorable barrier withheld him in spite of his great desire.

"I got kind of a headache," he muttered, keeping his eyes all the while upon his feet.

The kind woman knew that he had no headache,

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but she decided it would be better not to urge him; so she gave him a final compassionate glance, a faint smile beneath the compassion, and withdrew. A few moments later, the renewal of shouts and laughter behind him brought Penrod knowledge that fresh games were in progress. So time wore on —and still he sat upon the horse-trough with his back to the Party.

Now, while he thus suffered, things went not altogether well with the former friend of his bosom. Samuel Williams likewise experienced an anguish due to tampering with unfamiliar animals in the country. Sam and Mabel Rorebeck had wandered away from their companions, and stood together upon a boardwalk leading to a spring-house. Nowhere did the world seem more peaceful or less threatening, and the moment was sweet to Sam. Miss Rorebeck's mood, usually disdainful or hoydenish, was placid to-day. The Party had affected her favourably, and she had spoken to Sam with unaccustomed politeness throughout. Once or twice he had detected a gleam actually coy, almost tender, in her eye. Such a gleam was in it now, as they stood together on the boardwalk.

"Listen here, Mabul," said Sam.

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"What you want?"

Sam's mind was not devious; his way and his character were sterling.

"Listen here," he said: "You're my girl."

"Not, either!" Mabel said promptly—but not crossly.

"You are, too," Sam insisted, without any embarrassment. "You have been a long while."

"Have not!"

"Yes, sir," he said; "I told pretty near ev'rybody you are."

At this Mabel gave her head a little toss of superiority. "Pooh! I guess I know that!"

"Well, anyways, you are."

She was not adamant.

"Well"—she paused and looked away; then she swung her left foot, scuffing the planks of the walk —"well, I don't care whether I am or whether I'm not. It don't make any differ'nce to *me*. Let's go back and play some more."

"All right," said Sam; "I just as soon."

And as they turned to go, she gave him a sidelong look such as he had never received from her—there was both acquiescence and proprietorship in it—and Sam knew that their affair was settled; they were

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pledged. All at once, Mabel had taken a new attitude toward him; she was visibly fond, and, so strange is the human heart, Sam felt no elation. Instead, he noticed, for the first time, that Mabel had a shiny nose. Suddenly she caught his arm.

"Look!" she cried. "Look at that nasty spider! It scares me! Stamp on him, Sam!"

Sam gallantly tried to stamp on the spider, which was crawling across the boardwalk; but the spider was agile, and Sam brought down his foot on the planks several times without success. However, the stamping was not without effect, since it took place directly over a spot where an industrious tribe of insects had established their commune.

"Look there—oh, look, Sam!" Mabel exclaimed, pointing to a wide crack between the planks. "What are those things? What are they doing?"

Sam bent over the crack, which was displaying a curious life and movement.

"Nothin' but bumblebees," he said. "There's more of 'em than I ever saw in one place before. Looks as if they'd got caught in this crack and was tryin' to get out."

"Wouldn't they sting us?" Mabel asked.

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"No. They just buzz around apple-trees and flowerbeds. They don't——"

That was the extent of his coherent observations. The emerging bumblebees, conceiving themselves pledged to a war for existence, and easily identifying their stamping invaders, took wing for battle—and five seconds later Sam and Mabel rejoined the Party. Rather, they did not rejoin but dispersed the Party; they came in a frenzy of gesture, each closely attended by four or five poising and darting bumblebees; and the other children shrieked and ran, not desiring the companionship of Sam or Mabel at that time.

Again the stocky little farm-boy proved his intelligence and his capacity. Instead of running away, he gathered two thick branches from a bush, and, with one of these in each hand, he beat about Mabel, slaying such bees as would not desist from attacking her, driving the others off; then he went to Sam's assistance in the same manner.

"The ones that ain't dead'll go on home now," this competent Freddie said. "Soon as they see you're fur enough away from the honeycomb they're makin' and ain't goin' back there, why, most always they won't do nothin' much more to pester you."

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"Ow-*ow!*" Mabel wailed, and Sam moaned, holding one hand to his cheek while he eloquently waved the other in the air.

"They didn't git at you much," said Freddie. "Wait till some *hornets* stings you up! All you need's a few mud poultices, and you won't hardly hurt at all."

Thereupon the talented boy made mud poultices for them, and presently they found that he was right—the pain of their stings became bearable, and then virtually disappeared. Sam had four—two on his chin, one on his cheek, and one on the end of his left forefinger—while Mabel had only two, both on the lower lip.

Naturally, little Freddie was more admired than ever; and when play was resumed, the whole Party clamoured to be "on Freddie's side." That is, everybody except Penrod and Sam. Penrod remained a miserable, brooding hermit, and Sam was in no mood for games.

This aloofness of Sam's was curious, and but indirectly attributable to bumblebees. The pain of his wound no longer troubled him, and both he and Mabel felt so much better that they removed their poultices; but, of course, there were swollen places

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where the stings had been, and these were the cause of Sam's peculiar state of mind. It is a fact that he never once even thought of how far from improved his own face looked; nor did Mabel think of that. She came and sat by him on a log and chattered sweetly, gazing at him with that new favour and proprietorship which she had shown for the first time just before their trouble with the bees. His altered looks evidently meant nothing to her—and, as for her own, she had seen no mirror. In her fondness, she seemed to forget that her appearance, as well as Sam's, was changed.

"I'd rather sit with you than play, Sam," she said sweetly.

Sam looked at her, then turned his head away.

"Well, you can if you want to," he said in a subdued voice. It seemed to him utterly incredible that he had ever told Mabel that she was his "girl." "I never *ast* you to come," he added feebly. "You don't haf to, Mabul."

"I *like* to."

He did not wish to look at her again; but he found it impossible to resist an impulse which made him do so. And as he did look at her, she smiled fondly. That is, her intention was to smile fondly,

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but the result was more unfortunate than she knew. Sam rose.

"You keep sittin' here," he said heavily, beginning to walk away. "They got a telephone in this farmhouse, and I promised my mother I'd telephone her what time we'll prob'ly get home. I'll come back after a while, I expect, maybe."

He entered the open front door of the farmhouse. He walked straight through the house to the kitchen, passed out of the kitchen door, crossed a wide truck-garden, and found himself in a pasture. Here he seated himself on the ground, with his back to a fence-post, and, without knowing it, groaned. He had not the least idea what was the matter with him. All he knew was that he hated the Party and wanted to be, and to remain, as far as possible from Mabel Rorebeck. In good truth, he felt worse than Penrod did.

These two, however, were not to be the only deep sufferers of the day, and Sam's retirement to the pasture presently caused him to miss the stirring climax of the picnic, wherein public sentiment veered completely, a great reputation was lost, and a lost one was gloriously recovered.

Beyond a lane that ran beside the farm-yard there

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was a thicket of underbrush extending to a bluff that overlooked a sluggish creek. One of Marjorie's guests climbed the fence, crossed the lane, and investigated the thicket. This was Master Carlie Chitten, a sophisticated ten-year-old who lived in hotels and cared little for the society of children. Bored by the simple pastimes offered him that afternoon, he withdrew for a cigarette, and having lighted it in the seclusion of the thicket, he pressed on and came to the edge of the bluff overlooking the creek. A tin can floated slowly down-stream; and Carlie began to interest himself a little in throwing stones at it.

Then an angry voice shouted from below.

"Hi! Wop moo mooin'? Quip app!"

The words were of a language unknown to Carlie, and he peered wonderingly downward, but the underbrush was thick and he saw no one, though two fishing-poles were visible, supporting lines that hung into the water. Carlie threw another stone.

"Hyuh, boy!" shouted a second voice, as angry as the first. "You stop th'owin' stones in 'is crick, sca'in' fish away. You g'on 'bout you' biz'niss!"

Carlie threw another stone, and both voices protested fiercely.

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"Gow! Wop moo mooin'?"

"White boy, I come up aftuh you! Bus' you' hade!"

Again Carlie threw a stone, and there was another vehement outburst of protest. He smiled maliciously, and showered pebbles down upon the creek and upon the underbrush bordering it.

"Nigger!" he called spitefully. "Nigger! Nigger! Nigger!"

Then he turned to run, but it was too late. A black midget who had climbed the bluff like a cat, squirmed through a bush behind him, dove for him, and caught him round the ankles. Immediately, a larger coloured boy arrived—and Master Chitten began to regret his impudence acutely. Not long afterward, for the second time during Marjorie Jones' picnic, calls for help were sent upon the startled air.

"My goodness!" Marjorie cried. "What *is* that noise?"

"Help!" came the voice of Carlie Chitten, faintly and muffled. "He-elp!"

The game stopped, and everybody listened.

"It's over there," said pale Georgie Bassett; "over yonder toward the creek."

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"No, it isn't!" Marjorie cried. "It's around behind the house!"

"No; it's over yond——"

But there was no longer need for any discussion of the question. Carlie Chitten ran out of the thicket, holding his handkerchief to his nose, and, having climbed the fence, went hastily to the pump and began to apply water to his handkerchief, thence to his nose and other portions of his face. His hat was gone, his collar hung by shreds, and his handkerchief looked like a banner of revolt.

"Nun-niggers!" he was able to explain, though not without agitation. "Two ole ugly black niggers! They were fishin' and I didn't do anything to 'em at all. They just jumped on me and tried to kuck-kill me!"

Most of the little girls screamed.

"Oh, I'm so frightened!" Marjorie cried. "They might come *here!* I'm going to get mamma; she's in the house talking to the tenant's wife."

Once more the wonderful Freddie assumed the responsibility for everything.

"You needn't to mind callin' nobody," he said, and he picked up a discarded broom-handle that lay upon the ground. "I'll run 'em off," he added,

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with a touch of complacency; for the honour he had received that day might well have turned a firmer head than his, and inspired some rashness within. "*I* kin 'tend to a few niggers, I guess, without routin' out no women folks. We don't allow no fishin' in that crick, anyhow."

And he marched away, followed—at some distance—by a throng now absolutely in awe of him. He passed through the gate into the lane and entered the thicket.

"*Hey*, you black niggers!" he could be heard calling. "Clear out o' here, you nigs!"

Then, as he pressed onward, only the faint sound of the bushes being disturbed came to the ears of his hushed gallery, pausing in the lane. Some of the girls seized one another by the hand, and several of the boys nervously teased them for being frightened, while others claimed that *they* wouldn't be afraid to go after those ole niggers, only they didn't want to get in Freddie's way or anything, and, of course, as he lived here, he knew how to get around better, and it was his own business to keep anybody from fishing in the creek; so it was better for him to 'tend to it alone without everybody getting in his way and everything.

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But Carlie Chitten remained at the pump, ministering to himself, and near him lingered the morbid Penrod.

"*I* wouldn't of been afraid of 'em," asserted this latter, addressing a fellow being for the first time in a long, long while. "*I* never get afraid of any ole niggers."

"Oh, no, you don't!" Carlie returned bitterly. "I guess—" he paused to sniff and to press the pink and watery handkerchief upon one of his eyes and then upon the other—"I guess you'd *like* to have one of 'em poundin' you all over your face while the other kep' bitin' your leg! Yes, you would!"

"'Bitin'?'" Penrod repeated with a sudden warmer interest. "Did one of 'em bite you? What kind of lookin' niggers were they?"

"*Horrable*-lookin'!" Carlie replied sincerely.

"Was there a little one and a big one?"

"Yes, there was."

"Which one bit you?"

"The little one."

"What did he talk like?"

"He was so mad he couldn't talk at all," said Carlie. "Or else he might of been tongue-tied. He

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talked like this: 'Wopoowoomoo I moe woo.' He was crazy, I guess, and I bet I get the hyderophobia from——" But he ceased to speak, and confined his energies to nursing his hurts, for his auditor was gone. Penrod had run to join the nervous group in the lane.

"Which way'd Freddie go?" he demanded excitedly.

"Right there," Roddy Bitts answered, pointing to a footpath that wound among clumps of saplings. "He was walkin' along on that path and he was a-hollering——"

Roddy was interrupted by a new hollering, distant but vehement, even ferocious. The voice of Freddie, shouting, "*I* got you, you ole black niggers!" was heard only once, being smothered under a conglomerate burst of back-to-nature yelling; and, as the banks of the Congo could furnish similar sounds, though probably nothing worse, there resulted strong symptoms of a panic in the lane.

What was the general amazement, then, at the actions of Penrod Schofield! He threw off his jacket and rolled up the polka-dotted sleeves from his thin and unmuscular forearms.

"Nigger! Nigger!" he blatted. "You let that

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boy alone! *I'm* after you now, you ole niggers, you! Nigger! Nigger!"

And he ran into the underbrush, disappearing from their sight, incessantly shouting the battle-cry of "Nigger!"

Heroism being undoubtedly contagious—that is, to a certain extent—the whole Party (except, of course, Carlie Chitten and the absent Sam) followed Penrod. They did not run, as he did; they allowed him sufficient precedence, indeed; but they made their way into the underbrush, keeping fairly close together and, under the spell of his dashing example, shouting and piping: "Nigger! Nigger!" with all the power of their lungs and bronchial tubes.

Half-way to the edge of the bluff they encountered little Freddie, without his broom-handle, fleeing—fleeing openly and vociferously. He had his reasons. His nose was as the nose of Master Chitten; his two eyes were as the eyes of Master Chitten; he had similarly been bitten about the legs, and his small blue shirt needed adjustment in relation to his overalls; he should not have been seen by people of fashion. He had been so mishandled, in fact, and such was his unnerved state, that he paused to make no report of affairs as he had found them, but

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continued his flight through the midst of the Party, upsetting Maurice Levy and stepping upon him in the great haste of the moment. Seeming to believe himself still pursued, the farm-boy sped ever on, bellowing, till the noise of his lamentation died in the Party's ears on account of distance.

Meanwhile, from the direction of the creek, rang the war-cries of Penrod: "Nigger! I'll get you *next* time, you ole niggers!" And these were cries of triumph.

Therefore, the children pressed on till they stood upon the verge of the bluff. A few feet below them was Penrod, unmangled—not even dusty. He was throwing stones across the narrow stream at a shadowy grove of trees through which two dim, dark figures were hastening in flight, bearing fishing-poles and cans of bait.

"Nigger!" shouted Penrod. "Dare you half-way back here!"

From the grove, where the two figures no longer could be seen, there came receding vocal noises of a character inappropriate to the circumstances.

Marjorie gasped.

"Why, it sounded" she said, "it sounded like they were *laughing!*"

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"I guess they were," said Penrod, and he explained, with an air of modesty. "Guess they *would* laugh, 'cause I had to let 'em get away from me! Time I sat down to take my shoes and stockin's off, so't I could chase 'em across the crick, they'd got so far on the other side it wasn't any use for me to try to catch 'em."

Marjorie approached him.

"Penrod," she said softly, "that little Freddie's the worst little cardy calf! He ran away and left you to fight both of 'em all alone, didn't he?"

"Well," said Penrod, "one of 'em was a pretty big nigger." Thus the generous boy excused the flight of Freddie.

"He's nothing but a cardy calf," said Marjorie. "I'd been treating him just as nice as anybody, because he helped *you* when you wanted to slap that ole pig on the nose, Penrod."

"I guess I'll go back there," he said thoughtfully, "and do it now."

But Marjorie seized his arm.

"You shan't!" she cried. "There's mamma calling us. It's Refreshments! Come on, Penrod!"

Thus, when Sam Williams, sluggishly and with a strange expression, rejoined the Party, after hearing

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shouts that betokened the arrival of rich foods, he found one whom he had left the lowest of the low exalted to be highest of the high. The children sat upon the dry grass of the farmer's front yard, and the very centre of the group was the flushed and happy Penrod. Marjorie Jones gazed upon him eagerly, and so continuously that sometimes her spoon touched her chin or cheek before it went into her mouth; and she did not seem to be able to sit close enough to him. Mabel came and sat by Sam, and he was just able to endure this, for the results of her stings were now much reduced. She excitedly told him all about the magnificent behaviour of Penrod, and it is not to be denied that Sam, who was Penrod's most intimate friend and knew him better than did any of the others—it is not to be denied that Sam was the most astonished person at the Party.

When it was all over, and the wagons had brought them home, Penrod and Sam sat on the back fence at Penrod's, waiting to be called to dinner. It was sunset, and they were ruminative and silent, Sam's expression being still one of brooding perplexity.

Down the alley tramped two dusty coloured boys, one middle-sized, like Penrod and Sam, and the other

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very small. They carried fishing-poles over their shoulders, and each had a string of two or three tiny fish. At sight of Penrod they chuckled, then burst into outright laughter.

"My goo'ness!" the larger called to him. "What fer you had to go an' ack so mad? Ack like you goin' to tear me an' Verman's heads off!" And, yelling with laughter, the two passed into the cottage across the alley from Penrod's stable.

Sam's mouth opened wide, and remained so for a length of time that made Penrod uncomfortable. In Sam's mind were arising certain ideas and the vague perception of a truth which had appeared to Penrod earlier in the day when he was meditating upon the injustice of the world. The mother pig had attacked the stranger, but fled from Freddie, whom she knew, just as Penrod's little old dog Duke would attack a stranger but, on occasion, flee from Penrod. Sam was not thinking of pigs or of dogs, and yet his thoughts were akin to Penrod's earlier thoughts upon these subjects, being concerned with the discriminations of animals, shown in their behaviour toward strangers and toward those with whom they are familiar. Sam's mouth finally closed, then opened again.

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"By gory!" he shouted. "It was only Herman and Verman!"

"Well, what if it was?"

"You *knew* 'em!" Sam insisted. "You *knew* 'em! They knew *you!*"

"Well, what if they did?" said Penrod brazenly. "I *chased* 'em, didn't I? What's the differ'nce?"

Sam was nonplussed. He knew there was a difference, and he felt indignant about it, but he felt as baffled as indignant. The underhandedness of the whole affair seemed as plain as day, and yet Sam found himself unable to put it into words.

He gave it up.

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PENROD—ZOÖLOGIST

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PENROD—ZOÖLOGIST

FOR a boy, summer-time is the period of highest scientific interest; it is the bug season. Penrod Schofield and his friend, Sam Williams, stood enthralled, in Penrod's backyard, staring at a magnificent creature they had discovered upon the stalk of a lush bush in the fence corner. The thing was so still, it might have been a pixie's concertina, painted dusty green and ornamented with brilliant pool balls from a pixie pool table. To Penrod and Sam it was known as a "tobacco-worm," and it was the largest and fattest they had ever seen. The two boys stared in silence for a long time; finally, Penrod spoke in a hushed voice.

"I wonder what he's thinkin' about." And, in fact, it was reasonable to suppose the motionless creature lost in reverie.

"Thinkin' about how fat he is, maybe," Sam suggested.

"I bet you don't know which end his head is," said Penrod, his tone somewhat implying that this

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wagered bit of ignorance was one of Sam's many inferiorities to himself.

"I bet you don't, either."

"Well, whoever said I did?" Penrod retorted crossly.

"Well, did *I* say *I* did?"

"Well, whoever said you did say you did?"

Sam looked annoyed and also somewhat confused. "Well, you said," he began, "you said I didn't know which end his head is, and I——"

"Well, you *don't* know which end his head is."

"Well, you don't, either."

"Well, whoever said I did?"

"Well, *I* didn't say *I*——"

"Well, whoever said you did say you did?"

"Look here——" Sam began, but paused; bewildered by that feeling of having done the same thing before, which inclines people, sometimes, to believe in the theory of reincarnation.

A movement on the part of the green creature distracted the attention of both boys, momentarily, from their incipient feud.

"Look!" Penrod cried. "He's movin'!"

"Climbin' up the bush," observed Sam. "That shows which end his head is: it's on top."

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"It doesn't have to be on top just because he's climbin' up the bush," Penrod returned scornfully. "I guess he could back up, just as well as climb up, couldn't he?"

"Well, he wouldn't," Sam argued. "What would he want to back up for, when he could just as easy climb up? His head's on top of him, and that proves it."

"It doesn't either prove it. Where's his face? The only way you can prove where his head is, is where his face is, isn't it?"

"No, it isn't!" Sam cried hotly. "He hasn't got any face; and, besides, his top end looks just as much like his face as his bottom end. You can't tell the difference. Anyway, anybody with good sense would know his head's on top of him. He wouldn't *want* to have it any place else, would he?"

"How do *you* know what he'd want?" Penrod demanded. "He might want it some place else just as well as not."

"Well, what for?" Sam urged with exasperation. "What on earth would he want it some place else *for?*"

"What for?" Penrod mocked derisively, sure of

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a coming triumph in the debate. "You don't know what for?"

"No, I don't, and you don't, either!"

"Oh, I don't, don't I?"

"No, you *don't!*" Sam shouted.

Penrod laughed pityingly. "Bet you I can prove it."

"Well, prove it then."

"Well, look here. Suppose sumpthing was *after* him: he'd want to have his head on his bottom end so's he could keep watchin' out to see if it was comin' after him up the stalk, wouldn't he? *That* proves it, I guess!"

It did—so far as Sam Williams was concerned. Sam was overwhelmed; he had nothing to say.

Penrod was not disposed to make his triumph an easy one for the vanquished. "Well," he jeered, "I guess that shows how much you know about *worms!*"

Sam had the grace to admit a fair defeat. "Maybe I don't," he said—"about tobacco-worms. I don't suppose I ever saw more'n five or six in my life." He dug the ground with the toe of his shoe despondently, then brightened, all at once, with the advent of a recollection. "I bet I know sumpthing about grasshoppers that you don't."

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"I bet you don't."

"Well, I can prove it."

"Go ahead and prove it!"

"I bet you don't know grasshoppers chew tobacco."

At this Penrod yelled with consuming scorn.

"They do, too!" Sam asserted, indignantly.

Penrod laughed, gesticulated, danced, and bellowed. He was outrageous.

"You wait!" Sam began to browse in the grass, searching, while his friend, in convulsions of derisive mirth, threw himself full-length beneath the bush; rolled on his stomach, squealed insults, beat the ground with his hands, and wriggled his feet in the air.

"Grasshoppers chew tobacco!" howled Penrod. "Grasshoppers chew tobacco! Grasshop—— Oh, ho, ho, ho!"

"Here," said Sam, bringing a grasshopper for his inspection. "You watch him, now."

He gave the grasshopper a command, squeezed him slightly, and proved the case absolutely.

"Look there!" he cried, flourishing Exhibit A upon his thumbnail. "*Now*, say grasshoppers don't chew tobacco!"

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Penrod was beside himself, but not (as would have been proper) with confusion: ecstasy was his emotion—and there followed a bad quarter of an hour for the grasshoppers in that portion of the yard.

"Pshaw!" said Sam, "I've known grasshoppers chewed tobacco ever since I was five years old."

"You never *said* anything about it!" Penrod exclaimed, marvelling at such reticence. It seemed to him, just now, that he would never know another instant of *ennui* so long as he lived—at least, not in grasshopper-time.

"I thought pretty near everybody knew grasshoppers chewed tobacco," Sam said modestly. "You said I didn't know much about worms, and I said I bet I knew something about grasshoppers you didn't know—but I kind of thought you did, though."

"What else can they do?" Penrod's tone indicated that a sincere deference was no more than Sam's due in all matters concerning grasshoppers.

"Nothin'. That's all they're good for."

"Where d'you suppose they get their tobacco in the first place? Hop around groc'ry stores, you guess?"

"Yes; lots of other places."

The experiment had been repeated indeed *ad*

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nauseam, and until all the available grasshoppers were in no condition to pursue their bad habits—or their good ones for that matter—and Penrod paused to seek further knowledge at its recent fountain-head.

"Sam, do you know anything else?" he inquired hopefully.

"Yes, I do!" replied Master Williams with natural resentment.

"I mean," Penrod explained, "I mean. Do you know anything else *I* don't know?"

"Oh!" Sam was mollified at once. "Well, I guess prob'ly I do," he said thoughtfully. "Lemme see. Oh, yes! I bet you don't know if you put a black hair from a horse's tail in a bottle and put water in it, and leave it there for three weeks, it'll turn into a snake."

"I do, too!" said Penrod. "I knew *that* ever since I was little."

"I bet you haven't known it any longer'n I have. I knew it when I was little, too."

"Everybody knows a black hair from a horse's tail will turn into a snake," Penrod declared. "Who doesn't know *that?*"

"Well, I never said they didn't, did I?" Sam looked aggrieved.

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"Well, who said you did say——" Penrod paused; a sudden light in his eyes. "Sam, did you ever *try* it?"

"No," said Sam, thoughtfully. "I guess when I heard it we didn't have any horse, and I was too little to get one from any other people's horse—or sumpthing."

Penrod jumped up eagerly. "Well, we aren't too little now!" he shouted.

"*Yay!*" This jubilant outcry from Sam demonstrated that reciprocal fires of enthusiasm were kindled in his bosom. "Where's a horse?"

Simultaneously their eyes fell upon what they sought. In the side street stood a grocer's wagon, and the grocer had just gone into the kitchen. Attached to the wagon was an elderly bay horse. Attached to the elderly bay horse was a black tail. The prospective snake manufacturers drew near the raw material.

The elderly bay horse switched his black tail at a fly, a gesture unfortunate for Penrod, upon whose eager countenance it culminated.

"*Oof!*" He jumped back, sputtering; and the horse looked round inquiringly; then, seeing boys, assumed an expression of implacable fury.

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"Go on," Sam urged. "Pull 'em out. Two's enough."

Penrod rubbed his face and looked thoughtful.

"I wonder if they wouldn't do just as well from his mane," he said.

"No, sir! They got to be from his tail. I know *that* much!"

Penrod glanced uneasily at the horse's horizontal ears. "You pull 'em, Sam," he suggested, edging away. "I'll go and be getting the bottles ready to put 'em in."

"No, sir!" Sam insisted. "You started to pull 'em and you ought to do it. *I* didn't start to pull 'em, did I?"

"Now, see here"—Penrod became argumentative—"you don't know where to find any bottles, and——"

"You better quit talkin' so much," Sam interrupted doggedly. "Go ahead and pull those two hairs out of his tail or pretty soon the man'll come out and drive him away—and then where'll we be? You started to do it, and so it's your business to. Go ahead and *do* it, and don't talk so much about it. That's the way to do a thing."

"Well, I *am* goin' to, ain't I?"

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"*Now!*" Sam exclaimed. "He's quit lookin' at us. Quick!"

Seizing this opportunity, Penrod ventured the deed and was rewarded. The elderly horse seemed to have forgotten his animosity in a fit of depression: he hung his head, and marked the ravishment by nothing more than a slight shudder.

"There!" said Penrod; and as they reëntered the yard, through the side gate, he looked back disdainfully at the gloomy quadruped. "It's easy to get hairs out of a horse's tail for a person that knows the right way to do it. I bet I could pulled his whole tail out!"

Preliminaries to the great experiment were worked out with care. The largest empty bottles obtainable were selected, cleaned, and filled with fair water. Then, with befitting solicitude the two long black hairs were lowered into the water, and the bottles were corked. After that, a label was pasted upon each, exhibiting the owner's name and address. The fascinating work was not complete, however. Penrod paid a visit to the kitchen clock, and, after some severe exercises in computation, the following note was inscribed in precise duplicate upon the labels:

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Hair from Jacop R. Krish and cos horse tail put in sixteen minutes of evelen oclock July 11 Snake comes sixteen minutes of evelen oclock July 32.

They set the bottles, side by side, upon a low shelf in the stable; stood before them; gazed upon them.

"Don't you wish they'd turn right now?" said Penrod yearningly. "I don't see why it's got to be three weeks."

"Well, it has."

"I know that, but I wish it didn't *haf* to be. Well, anyway, three weeks from now we'll be lookin' at our good old snakes, all right!"

"Three weeks from now!" Sam echoed with luscious anticipation. "Yes, sir! *Oh*, oh!"

"What'll we feed 'em?"

"I don't know. Suppose they'll want to come out of the bottles?"

"You bet they will! I'm goin' to try to train mine to follow me all round the yard—maybe take it with me when school begins, and ——"

"*Oh*, oh!" cried Sam. "So'm I. Look out, ole teacher!"

They shouted with joy of the picture.

"I wouldn't take a million dollars for mine!" said Penrod.

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"Neither would I," said Sam. "I wouldn't take two million!"

"Neither would I!"

These were large-sounding declarations, but the remarkable thing about them is that they were literally true. At that moment each boy would have refused a perfectly sound check for $2,000,000 in exchange for a bottled hair from Jacob R. Krish and Company's horse's tail. Of course, if two million dollars' worth of visible ponies, bicycles, ice-cream, and inferior firearms could have been offered instead of a check, the case might have been different.

Penrod took his bottle to his room that night; it stood close by his bedside throughout the long dark hours; and once, waking suddenly, he groped for it feverishly, in fear. His fingers found the smooth, cool curves of its neck, and, reassured, he slept again, a smile upon his face. And in the morning, his waking eyes anxiously sought the bottle and its tenant; all was safe, and Penrod rose in joy.

Never was treasure more closely guarded or more steadfastly watched; and, as the days passed, there developed in Penrod's mind a somewhat definite picture of the little companion soon to be his: he was sure it would have brown eyes—admiring eyes, obe-

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dient and faithful, like a dog's. And, while these thoughts floated within him, he would sit, gazing at the bottle, a gentle and warming affection emanating from him. At such times, his look was fond and proud; there was something ineffable in it. Later in life he might wear that expression again, but this was the first time it had come to him.

It was the paternal look.

Twenty-one slow days must pass before the rapturous advent; twelve had gone when Sam reported that symptoms of the great change were appearing in his "snake," which he had taken to his own home. (They had discarded the term "hair" on the second day.)

"Yes, sir," said Sam, "he's turned all round in the bottle from the way he was layin' yesterday; kind of looks like he was restless, to *me*. And there's sumpthing like little bubbles on him up at the end where his head's goin' to be."

The hair in Penrod's bottle lacked such accomplishment for its owner to vaunt; he looked coldly at Sam and began to whistle.

The fact that his treasure exhibited no tokens of the transition did not disturb him. No slightest doubt shadowed his ardent confidence. Tadpoles

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become frogs; caterpillars make themselves into cocoons; and cocoons are really butterflies; he had owned cocoons that showed no change in appearance until the very hour of the butterflies' emergence. The hair in the bottle was destined to become an attractive young snake, and by the time Penrod discovered that the thirty-second of July would really be the first of August, it seemed to him that it almost *was* a snake, already.

No other possible or impossible metamorphosis could have held him so persistently enthralled. He found occupations other than staring at the bottle, but no other that so fascinated him. He went about everything else with an air of preoccupation; his reveries grew longer and more profound; and, to obtain his attention, his family found it necessary to address him so many times that Mr. Schofield reverted to legendary threats of "military school" as a remedy for extreme cases of stubbornness. He was not in his son's confidence; Penrod's ideas and feelings about his "snake" were far too intimate for domestic discussion.

A boy of eleven keeps his real self to himself, and often the members of his family do not know him. "They think they do, but they don't!"

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The final week of the three was one of internal excitement, heightening almost unbearably as the climax approached. Then, one afternoon a sudden fear assailed him, occasioned by Duke, his little, old wistful dog, who came amiably to lie at his feet as he sat in the stable with the sacred bottle.

"*Duke!*" Penrod shouted in a terrible voice.

Duke looked utterly hopeless at once, turned himself on his back, and became lethargic.

"Get up! You get up!" Penrod seized upon the limp forepaws, turned Duke right side up; then forced his nose against the bottle.

"You see that snake in there?"

Duke closed his eyes torpidly.

"Now you take a good look, and if I ever catch you comin' anywhere *near* that snake, when he gets to be one, you'll be lucky if you get home alive! You look out, I tell you, and you better remember what I say! You be mi-i-ighty careful!"

That was the nineteenth day.

The twentieth was rainy and passed uneventfully, but Sam and Penrod met in the stable, during the afternoon, and held a consultation. Sam reported no further changes, and there was no visible alteration in the appearance or attitude of the hair

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in Penrod's bottle. Nevertheless, both boys were deeply stirred by the sense of their coming happiness —though outwardly they managed to appear calm and unostentatious.

The first of August dawned fair and cool; no sweeter birthday could have been selected in all the year. Penrod woke with the joyous feeling that riches had come to him in his sleep. The great day was unfolding itself at last.

> . . . The gladdest of all the glad new year!
> For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother,
> I'm to be Queen o' the May!

That was how he felt.

As his eyes opened and fell upon the bottle, bathed in morning sunshine on the chair by his bed, he started with joy. The hair had altered its position in the water during the night: the miracle had begun to work, and sixteen minutes to eleven would see it consummated. He doubted it no more than he doubted that the sun would set, that evening, in the west.

He dressed slowly and tremulously, wondering what he would name it.

Then, instead of descending to breakfast, he sat

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upon his bed to gaze upon the marvel, and continued to sit—and sit—and sit. Meantime, urgent requests for his presence in the dining room went wholly unheeded, until finally Margaret, his pretty nineteen-year-old sister, appeared in the doorway.

"Penrod!"

Instinctively, he leaped between her and the sacred bottle, that she might not see it. He trusted no woman in any weighty affair—least of all a sister! Perhaps it would have been better if he had confided in Margaret; but the dice of Fate are loaded with just such perhapses. It was not to be!

"Papa sent me up to see what you are doing," said Margaret. "You've made him pretty cross. What *are* you doing?"

"Nothing."

"Then why in the world don't you come to breakfast?"

"Well, I *am* coming." His tone was that of a person unjustly attacked.

"Then come on!"

"Well, can't you wait a minute?"

"What for?"

"Nothing. What you all dressed up for this morning?"

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"I never *did* see such a boy!" Margaret exclaimed.

"You say that every day," Penrod retorted plaintively.

"It's true every day."

"Well, why can't you *say* sumpthing new, anyhow? If I was you, I'd——"

"Penrod! Are you coming?"

"Yep. *I'm* ready," he announced unexpectedly, having managed, with his hands behind him, to conceal the bottle beneath his pillow. He passed his sister in the hall, slid down the banisters, and entered the dining room far enough in advance of her to offer a plea for himself before she arrived. He explained in a grieved voice that his delay was all on account of Margaret's talkativeness. "I'd of been up there all morning," he concluded, "if I didn't have anything better to do except hang around listening to *her!*"

He obtained little credence.

Speeding from the table at the first possible moment, he returned to his own room, and in the doorway was struck by an unnamed fear. Katie, the housemaid, was putting the room in order; but she had not touched the bed. Once more able to

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breathe, he secured the bottle and departed, carrying it under his jacket, in front, without Katie's noticing anything unusual in his manner or bosom.

He started down the back stairs, but retreated, hearing his mother below, in conversation with the cook. Proceeding to the top of the front stairs, he heard the voices of Margaret and of Mr. Robert Williams, Sam's brother, a senior on vacation. A glance over the railing revealed this collegian, beautifully attired, confronting Margaret, who leaned against the newel in a way very irritating to a brother who wished to get out to the stable without being stopped or questioned, and without taking the risk of being sent upon errands. When Margaret got her back to the newel like that, Penrod knew she might stay there "hours and hours!"

"Margaret," said Mr. Williams, in a voice wholly inexplicable to Penrod, "I believe you care more for that bowl of gold-fish, in yonder, than you do for me!"

Penrod considered it probable that the young man spoke the truth. Certainly Margaret showed the gold-fish a great deal of attention.

Gold-fish!

He retired from the hallway into Margaret's room, and feeling satisfied that she would not come

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there for a long time, withdrew the treasure from beneath his coat, set it upon her dressing-table, and seated himself beside it.

Gold-fish!

His lip protruded in utter contempt. With the prospect before him of what was going to happen at, or before, sixteen minutes of eleven, the lives of other people—who had no hope of owning pet snakes, hatched in the bottle—seemed pitifully vacant. He felt sorry for Robert Williams. Robert had once recklessly given him a dollar—which had been expended as quickly as possible upon such a quantity and variety of indigestibles that Penrod had been sick for several days. Therefore he liked Robert; and now he pitied the young man for having nothing better to do than to talk to an uninteresting girl about whether she liked him as well as she did some gold-fish in a glass bowl!

A motor whizzed in the street, and, glancing out of the window, Penrod found occasion to be sorry for another young man, evidently coming to interview the uninteresting girl; and from various overhearings of late, Penrod had little doubt that this one, too, would be discussing, at the first opportunity, what Margaret liked.

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Confirming that opinion, the newcomer hastened eagerly up the walk and was cut off from Penrod's view by the roof of the front porch. He was a dainty and exquisite young man, more than well-to-do, much encouraged by Mrs. Schofield; and it was he who had given Margaret the bowl of goldfish—which lends some flavour to Robert Williams' dismal comparison. Ethelbert Magsworth Bitts was his name, and Penrod felt sorry for him—though not because that was his name. Mr. Ethelbert Magsworth Bitts was generally believed to be a very happy and fortunate youth: he had a yacht somewhere; he had a motor car, then at the curb and visible to Penrod's very eyes; he had money enough to buy all the candy in town if he chose; yet Penrod pitied him. Sixteen minutes of eleven that morning would find Mr. Bitts utterly snakeless. There are some things money cannot buy.

"What time *is* it getting to be?" Penrod suddenly inquired aloud.

There was a little clock on Margaret's dressing-table, but it had stopped. Looking out of the window, he thought the shadows had a very noonlike slant; and he bent upon the unchanged bottle a gaze not of misgiving, but of poignant inquiry.

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After that, upon an impulse, he jumped up and ran downstairs to the kitchen. There, the noisy old wall-clock reassured him soothingly. It marked fifteen minutes after ten.

"Yay, Penrod!"

This was a shout from the yard, and going to the door, Penrod beheld Sam Williams, radiant with excitement.

"Come on over to our stable," shouted Sam. "Come on!"

"Yours hasn't changed yet, has he?" Penrod asked anxiously.

"No, but he's beginning to. Come on and look at him!"

"Why didn't you bring him over here?"

"I didn't want to shake him up," said Sam. "You can't tell: it mightn't be good for him now."

"Has he swelled up any?"

"No, but he's begun breathin', and I saw him move a little. Hurry and come on; then we'll come back and look at yours."

Penrod did not stop for his hat: a jealous fear, suddenly roused, added speed to his feet. And when they reached Sam's stable he was profoundly re-

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lieved to find Sam's "snake" no more advanced toward the great transformation than his own. He expressed the opinion, indeed, that his was much further along.

"Why, how *could* it be?" demanded Sam resentfully. "I've been sittin' here lookin' at mine ever since breakfast and never took my eyes off him. Well, sir, I saw him *breathe*—he did it lots of times! You can't tell it just lookin' at him this way. You got to keep lookin' at him and lookin' at him; you bet I saw him *do* it, all right! And once he almost wiggled."

"'Almost' wiggled! Mine did wiggle!" Penrod said—and thereafter believed it.

"Well, so'd mine," said Sam.

"Well, who said he didn't? *I* didn't say he didn't, did I?"

"Well, who said you did say——"

"Come on!" interrupted Penrod. "Let's go back and look at mine."

"No, sir! I'm goin' to stay here and watch mine some more: it's comin' mighty close to sixteen min——"

"You said you——"

"Well, I will, soon as he's got all changed. I

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want to watch my own snake change, don't I? You better stay here and wait till he's all good and changed, then we'll go over and see if yours——"

"No, *sir!*" shouted Penrod over his shoulder, as he started home on the trot. "I'm goin' back to watch a *good* snake!"

He passed through the kitchen of his own home at the same gait, disregarding a request by Katie, the housemaid, for a hearing.

"Mister Penrod," she began, "I'd like to know what fer you want——"

"*Cat* fur!" facetiously shouted Penrod, already ascending the back stairs. "Cat fur, to make kitten britches with!"

"Mister Pen-*rod*——"

But he was out of hearing.

Next moment a terrible sound issued from Margaret's room. Mrs. Schofield, hurrying thither from her own apartment, encountered her son in the passageway.

"Penrod, what's the matter?"

"Where's my *snake?*"

"Where's what?"

"My snake!" he bellowed. "I want my snake! Where's my *sna-a-ake?*"

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"Penrod, are you crazy?" she cried. "What on earth are you——"

"My *snake!* I left it on Margaret's bureau and it's gone! Who took it? Who's been in there? Who's got my *snake?*"

Mrs. Schofield began to be alarmed in earnest; her son's manner and look were frantic, and his words, to her, incomprehensible.

"Penrod," she said nervously, "you must take some castor-oil. There wasn't any snake in Margaret's room. I heard her come upstairs for something a minute ago and go in there. If there'd been a snake there she'd have screamed, but she went downstairs again, and——"

So did Penrod go downstairs again. He plunged, three steps at a time, and exploded himself into the parlour, where Margaret sat (looking faintly embarrassed) with Mr. Ethelbert Magsworth Bitts (who had come to take her to drive and was frowning) and Mr. Robert Williams (who had come to take her for a walk and was scowling) and the gold-fish (who were swimming).

"Where's my *snake!*"

Margaret jumped. "Good gracious! What in the world——"

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"I want my *sna-a-ake!* I left it in a bottle on your——"

"Oh!" Margaret laughed, relieved. "There was a bottle on my dressing-table, and I noticed your name pasted on it; but I don't think there was anything inside it except water. At least I didn't——"

Penrod jumped up and down. "What did you do with it?" he roared.

"I gave it to Katie and told her to ask you if you wanted it, and if you didn't——"

Penrod left an overturned chair to blaze his trail. He burst into the kitchen, and Katie was there, bending over the sink.

"Where's my *snake!*"

"Oh, Lord!" wailed Katie, clutching at her heart.

"What'd you do with my *sna-a-ake?*"

"What did I what?"

"In a bottle!" he bellowed. "Margaret gave you my bottle with my *sna-a-ake* in it! I want my *snake!*"

"There wasn't any snake in it," said Katie. "There wasn't nothin' in it. Miss Marg'rut says the bottle had your name on it and I should ask you did you want it, and I showed it to Della and she

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says she wants it to put some syrup in it, and I wouldn't let her have it till I asked you, and you come in and I started to ask you what fer did you want it, and you says 'Cat fur to make kitten britches with,' and went on upstairs and so——"

"Where *is* it?" shouted Penrod hoarsely; and even in this agony of suspense marked that the clock stood at twenty minutes of eleven. "What did you do with my *snake?*"

"I never saw no snake. Do you think I'd 'a' touched it if there'd 'a' been any sna——"

"Where's my *bottle?*" demanded the frenzied boy.

"There wasn't anything in it but water," Katie said calmly.

"Where *is* it?"

"Here," said Katie, disengaging the empty bottle from a towel with which she was drying it. "You didn't seem to care enough about it to answer me, and I poured the water out, so Della could use it. There wasn't nothing in it at all—except a hair that must 'a' fell in it somehow and went down the sink when I poured the water out."

Penrod ran amuck.

With a maniacal yell he struck the bottle from her hand, and having seized a dishpan and hurled it

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through the open kitchen window, fled toward the front part of the house. In the library he encountered a young cat which had recently been adopted by his mother for "good luck," having followed her on the street. It was a guilty-looking young cat whose surreptitious countenance was in no wise improved by the wide pink ribbon it wore round its neck on the present occasion.

This young cat's manner indicated a low order of cunning; so low, in fact, that as the animal now demonstrated, it was even unaware of the significance, to cats, of human agitation. A really intelligent cat would have fled from Penrod's path at highest speed, but this one came running to him hopefully. It proved to be the most important mistake of the young cat's life.

To one maddened with outrage and injustice, and suffering with the agony of having just had his heart's idol poured down the kitchen sink, the sight of another person's pet—safe, pampered, and wearing a pink ribbon—was merely crazing. With a glad cry, Penrod plunged to meet the advance of the young cat, who turned back too late, but precisely in time to leave his extended tail in the clutch of the fevered boy.

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Once, twice, thrice, Penrod swung that electrified cat in a great circle, with the radius of a full arm and half a tail. The cat swept the air, shrieking inconceivably with horror, and at the top of its third orbit went so high, and so heartily, it brought down a gas-globe from the chandelier.

Startled exclamations came from the parlour, and, following them, the projectors thereof: Margaret, Mr. Ethelbert Magsworth Bitts, and Mr. Robert Williams. They reached the library in time to see the young cat become aviator, and, released from a hurtling hand, mount upward and upward upon invisible currents till it disappeared through the upper section of a window, which was "down from the top."

Crimson, infuriate, Penrod turned upon his dumfounded sister.

"You *ruined* my snake!" he bleated. "You watch what I do to your old gold-fish!"

He darted out of her detaining fingers, and though she pursued, and Robert Williams pursued, and Ethelbert Magsworth Bitts pursued, he had seized upon the bowl of gold-fish and was out in the hall with it before the hand of man—or girl—could be laid upon him.

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On the hall-table reposed two straw hats; one was Robert's; the other, which bore the mark of a London maker, was the hat of Ethelbert Magsworth Bitts.

Margaret, rushing through the doorway, uttered a lamentable outcry. But Penrod discriminated nothing between these hats. With a mighty effort he heaved the bowl of gold-fish upside down and poured water and fish as equally as he could into the two hats.

Then he threw the empty bowl boldly into the stomach of Ethelbert Magsworth Bitts, his nearest pursuer, and, with a great and demented roaring, dashed out of the open front door, and cometed away into space.

"Ugh!" said Mr. Bitts, and remained where he was, two hands upon the area of contact. But Robert Williams ran swiftly out upon the front porch where a coloured boy, with a bucket of soapy water in one hand and a scrubbing brush in the other, stood gazing in the direction of Penrod's evanishment. Robert seized upon the bucket, and was back in the hall, and had the gold-fish in the soapy water almost instantly, flopping rather feebly but alive.

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"Quick!" he said to Margaret. "Get a pail of clear water. I don't know if they can live in these suds more than a minute. Don't *stand* there! Hurry!"

And when she returned with the pail, he whispered to her: "I'll bring you another glass bowl for them this afternoon. Don't fret!"

"My hat!" said Mr. Bitts. "I believe that little brute has ruined it. I declare it's too bad!"

That was why Margaret went walking, a little later, instead of driving. And yet Ethelbert had given her the gold-fish, in the first place!

A week later this young man came forth melancholic from an interview with Miss Schofield. He had received the information from her that—in a general way—there were times in a girl's life when the man who most appeals to her must be of the general type of a senior in college; and that—generally speaking—if a girl feels that way, the best thing she can do may be—in general—to "wait" for that senior. Generally speaking, she added, she believed so.

As Mr. Bitts walked gloomily down the street he passed a grocer's wagon which bore the title, "Jacob R. Krish & Co." Attached to the wagon was an

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elderly bay horse, and attached to the elderly bay horse was a black tail. And on the other side of the horse, concealed from the view of Mr. Bitts, stood two boys, staring morbidly at the black tail.

"Yes, sir," said Sam Williams, "a nigger told me that the reason mine never turned to a snake was because you have to keep it three weeks without ever lookin' at it. If you look at it even once just to see how it's gettin' along, it's spoiled. Well, we kept lookin' at 'em—a hundred times a day, I bet—and that's what was the matter with 'em! That's why they didn't turn."

"*Mine* woulda!" insisted Penrod bitterly. "There wasn't anything wrong with mine. Mine woulda turned, anyway!"

Mr. Ethelbert Magsworth Bitts did not overhear this conversation. And if he had, he could not have understood it. Much less could he have traced any connection between a hair from the tail of Jacob Krish's elderly horse and the fact that Ethelbert Magsworth Bitts was destined to remain unwillingly a bachelor.

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THE FAIRY CORONET

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THE FAIRY CORONET

ON A Monday of early September, William Sylvanus Baxter, aged seventeen, walked in his native city, finding the streets lorn and sordid. To the eyes of other pedestrians, these streets had their usual appearance: people were going about their customary business, and some were lounging; everything moved or delayed in wonted order; nothing was disturbingly amiss. But to William all had changed, and the town was startling in its emptiness; it was like a "solitaire" ring with the bright gem ravished away, leaving a shamed and lonesome cavity exposed. On Saturday the Noblest girl that ever lived had concluded her long visit here and gone away—gone away on the train irretrievably; and she was not coming back. People do manage to live through typhoid fever, usually; and William managed to live through Sunday; but if his suffering became lighter on Monday he did not know it. True, he did faintly look forward to his departure for college, ten days

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hence, but only as a sick person looks forward to a change of scene which may distract the mind yet cannot cure. He felt that he might possibly find some transient occupation for his thoughts in his new surroundings as a Freshman; but the hope was dim and the prospect distant. Ten days can seem a fearsome stretch of time to seventeen, and William was not confident that this ten would ever actually pass. Eternity appeared to be already upon him.

He spent part of the morning sitting upon the curbstone opposite the house that the Noblest girl had visited. There was the gate whereon her delicate hand had so often rested during moments of parting—temporary partings, painful to William but sweet indeed compared to *this!* There was the porch where they two (and often intrusive others, also) had sat in the moonlight. There was the window of the little parlour where they two (and, again, others) had spent ineffable evenings. There was the maple tree under which they had stood one day; there were the other maple trees under which they had stood on other days—and it was at a point about twenty-four feet southwest of the southwest corner of the house that she had told him he certainly knew how to brush his hair

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the right way. Ah, what use, now, to brush it at all?

When people passed, and glanced at William, as he sat on the curbstone, he did not wonder what they thought of him. It seemed to him that he gave forth the impression that he was merely a person waiting for a street-car. How he contrived to feel that he was producing this effect is mysterious, since no one was deceived; persons wearing such expressions do not go about in street-cars.

After a while, he rose and went slowly upon other sad little pilgrimages. Here was the corner they had so often turned, as they came homeward from their walks together; all these fences they had passed. How changed these same fences looked to-day! Yonder was the house she had thought "so pretty," and, beyond it, the one she said was "dist *dreffful!*" Even for this dreadful house he had now an aching fondness: at least she had mentioned it; dreadful as it was, it had been part of her thoughts. Did she think of it still—perhaps at that very moment?

He stood for a long while outside the corner drug-store where they had consumed so much soda-water and ice-cream together, when his cir-

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cumstances permitted. Perhaps he had known happier moments with her there, in that friendly interior, than in any other place. She had always been bewitching at such times; and, in the simulation of their having something like a little meal together, at the counter in front of the soda-fountain, or at the small table near the case of soap and perfumes, there had been a coziness, almost a domesticity, that was heart-breaking to recall now, when it was all gone—forever!

He ate only waffles at lunch, and, except when they were being served, sat with his eyes fixed blankly upon the table. Even while eating his waffles, he seemed little conscious of what he did. His thoughtful mother spoke to him only when it was necessary, and checked his small sister, Jane, when the latter seemed about to make an obvious remark concerning the amount of maple syrup which, in his preoccupation, he had poured upon his plate. And after lunch, he wandered drearily away from the house, again renewing his wistful pilgrimages.

Toward evening he encountered a friend in precisely similar condition, one Johnnie Watson. Mr. Watson was to be William's classmate, and had likewise ten hollow, aching days to wait before his

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departure should give him, too, a change of scene, and a little distract his thoughts from the image of the vanished. They met, by a natural coincidence, across the street from the house where she had visited, for William had drifted back there—and so had Johnnie.

"H'lo, Silly Bill," said the fellow-wanderer dully.

"H'lo."

They then leaned against a picket fence throughout a long silence.

"Well——" Johnnie began, at last; but found his thought not pliable enough for expression in words, and gave over the effort. William suffered no disappointment in this failure of his friend to continue: he knew that neither Johnnie Watson nor any one else possessed the power to say a thing that could interest him. Their miserable harmony of silence was resumed.

Just then there passed a really beautiful girl, about their own age; she had just returned from a summer of glory at a sea beach, where she had been a furiously hunted belle. She smiled, and nodded charmingly at the two friends.

Johnnie Watson slightly disturbed his cap to return this salutation, and William did something

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indifferent with the brim of his straw hat. They stared at the lovely creature with hostility as she went down the street; for, though they felt nothing definite against her, they had known her well during childhood, and ever since.

"Girls in this town make me sick," said William.

"Do me, too," Johnnie murmured.

And their eyes followed the damsel with increased bitterness.

"Ole Bessie!" said William.

His friend breathed some sounds of scorn, then spoke in words. "Remember that time we painted her nose at kindygarten?"

"Yeh. Ole Bessie!"

"Just look at her! Look at her walk!" the ungallant Mr. Watson exclaimed. "She thinks she's great!"

"Girls in this town!" William repeated morbidly. "Girls in this town!"

"What *I* kind of get afraid of sometimes," said Johnnie, "is if maybe, after I get out o' college and come back here—well, maybe I'd get to sittin' around and sittin' around, the way lots o' men do when they come back here after they been in college, and maybe I'd get to sittin' around and sit-

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tin' around, and *marry* one o' these girls in this town—somebody like ole Bessie, maybe." He turned an apprehensive face upon his sad companion. "Wouldn't that be *horrible*, Bill? I do get kind of afraid it might happen to me some time, if I ever come back here and get to sittin' around, sittin' around that way."

"I'd go to the penitentiary first," said William, desperately. "Anyhow, I don't believe I'll ever come back to this town when I get out o' college."

"Where'll you go?"

"Well, in the first place," William answered thoughtfully—"in the first place, I want to find some town where anyway the girls aren't like the girls in this town."

"Well, I'd like to, too," Mr. Watson sighed. "Honestly, Bill, I believe we got the poorest lot o' girls in this town of any town in the country anywhere near the same size. Just look at 'em—just look at 'em!"

"That's what I say!" said William. "They, every last one, make me sick."

Then they brooded for a time, not speaking.

"Well——" Johnnie said again.

"Oh, my!" William sighed.

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They drooped to the curbstone together, and sat, facing that house where the Noblest had been a visitor. It was a plaintive shell, and the sight of it hurt them, but they could not help looking at it. They looked and looked and looked—and at intervals an elderly man inside the house looked forth (from the shelter of a lace curtain) at them.

"By glory, they're still there!" he said to his wife. "Even now, when she's been gone two days, four hours, and twenty minutes, we can't get rid of 'em. It's like a nightmare!"

"Poor things!" she rejoined.

"I'm afraid of 'em," he said. "I know they regard me with a sacred yearning because I was the little girl's host—or at least her hostess's father. I'm afraid to step outdoors."

"What nonsense! Why?"

"I'm afraid," he said. "I'm afraid they'd kiss me!"

But when he looked again, the amatory mourners were gone. Separately they languished, each upon his homeward way to dinner.

After the meal, William's mother took him aside. "Why don't you go to the theatre to-night, Willie?" she said. "They say there's quite an interesting play here."

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But there was no relaxation of the gloom that troubled her. "I don't care to," he said in a dead voice, turning away.

She detained him. "They say it's *very* interesting, Willie—and with such a charming young actress in it."

"I don't care to."

"I'll be glad to let you have the money for your ticket, Willie."

"I don't want to haf to sit through any ole play, mamma. I don't like goin' to the theatre, anyhow."

"Why, you did last year," she said. "You were quite wild about——"

"Well, I don't now."

"Don't like the theatre!" she cried.

"No. I don't. It's silly."

She paused for a moment to think, then she brightened. "I tell you what you do," she said. "Of course, you don't want to go alone. You go and invite Joe Bullitt or Johnnie Watson and take one of 'em with you. Here!" And she pressed a bill into his hand. "Run along now, and find either Joe or Johnnie—and don't let the box-office man cheat you and give you bad seats just because

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you're boys. They always have a few good ones at the last. Hop!"

William was far enough from hopping, but he did leave the house and move in the direction of Johnnie Watson's. Johnnie, sitting alone on the front porch of his place of residence, in the dusk, noted the approach of his friend, but did neither move nor speak until William gloomily stated the purpose of his errand.

"Want to go theatre? I got money."

Johnnie accepted in a manner equally morbid and laconic; and the box-office man, far from cheating them because they were boys, sold them two seats upon the front row. There they were installed when the curtain rose upon the comedy ("Lucy On Leave") at fifteen minutes after eight, but their expressions offered little to encourage the actor who opened the play. He was one of those who are able to see over the footlights, and, happening to glance down at William and Mr. Watson, he decided that this was going to be a terrible audience to play to.

So far as the melancholy friends were concerned, he was a true prophet. The two watched the earlier developments of the play with a disap-

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proval so fixed and so intense that it took the heart out of the leading comedian. He was another with the unfortunate gift of seeing his audience, and there were times when he felt that he must either leap down and strangle this pair of critics or publicly froth at the mouth. He did, in fact, introduce into his part some profanity extraneous to the matter in hand and unfamiliar to the author of the play. Even after that, William and Johnnie gave him no encouragement.

They went to the lobby of the theatre during the intermission, and Johnnie brought forth a packet of cigarettes. Cigarettes are often stencilled "vile," just as melodrama is usually stencilled "cheap"; these couplings have an easy cadence—but the cigarettes that Johnnie offered William really were vile. "Coffin-nail?" he said.

Each lit a vile cigarette and smoked rapidly. No doubt a little satisfaction came to them during the operation—a little alleviation of burden. Each, when he took his cigarette from his lips, watched the fingers that bore it; each, when he blew forth smoke, watched the smoke and the shapes it took. This smoking was a gesture and brought the pleasure of a satisfactory one.

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"That woman—that what's-her-name—that Millicent Semple ain't so bad," said Johnnie, alluding to the leading lady, the charming young actress of whom William's mother had spoken.

"No," said William languidly. "She's right good—in her way."

"If she was fixed up different," said Johnnie, "she wouldn't be so terrible to look at, prob'ly."

"I s'pose not," William assented. "Maybe she wouldn't. I dunno."

They went back to their seats in the front row.

Mrs. Baxter's light description of Miss Millicent Semple was "a charming young actress," though, as Miss Semple was about twenty, she did not seem young to William and Johnnie; in fact, her beauty struck them, at first, as being rather of the mature and ripened sort. Nevertheless, it began to have a fairly pleasant effect upon them—especially during a slight love scene between Miss Semple and the most noticeably dressed young actor in the company. Just as she left the stage, at the close of the scene, she tossed over her shoulder to this lucky person a rosebud and a look—and the look was like the rosebud: a little thing but piquant with sweet, wild promise.

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A sudden pang shot through the breast of William: this rosebud look, so fleeting, so exquisite, made him think too vividly of the departed Noblest —of Miss Pratt. It was like her! And such yearning rose within him that he was surprised at his own capacity for emotion. He suffered; but there was a bit of consolation, for it seemed to him that his feelings were greater and more sacred than those of which other people were capable, and that such feelings set him apart and above. And he began to imagine that Miss Millicent Semple, if she "knew," would understand this.

. . . During the intermission after the second act, the friends returned to the lobby and each smoked another vile cigarette.

"That Miss Semple *was* fixed up different this act," said Johnnie. "It kind of made her look better. It's funny, but some ways she kind of puts me in mind of—of Miss Pratt."

William frowned, not in disapproval but as one deeply considering. "Well—some," he said. "Some." He smoked with solemn elaboration for a moment or so, then nodded gravely and once more repeated his judicious word: "Some."

. . . In the course of the third act Miss

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Semple played something which had been called (in New York, naturally) "the biggest love scene in ten years." It was this episode which had helped so much to make the vogue of "Lucy On Leave"; and to-night it brought about important alterations inside two auditors whose initial coldness toward the comedy had been gradually disappearing.

Miss Semple was not only a charming actress; she knew how, in her slim, young way, to be quaintly bewitching. Her love-making was whimsical; she seemed one moment to be the slave of passion, and the next she withdrew all promises. She would skim out of a French window, laughing, only to rush back in overwhelming fondness. Faltering, she murmured and trembled—then was gone, leaving one of her rosebud looks behind her.

All this was so lovely, in a hundred small, unexpected ways, that it was startling; and when the act-drop fell, and the lights in the house sprang up for the intermission, elderly people were seen to be unusually brisk looking, while men of all ages worked a little with their neckties and the backs of their coat collars. As for William and Johnnie, they did not only these things but each saw to the arrangement of his hair, even as the

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two passed up the aisle to the lobby; though of course they remembered to make their expressions cold and forbidding, so long as they were facing any of the staring herd.

"'Nother coffin-nail, Bill?"

"I'll haf to go you, Johnnie. I'm smokin' too much lately, I guess—but I'll go you!"

"So'm I," said Johnnie. "I guess I got one lung about half gone anyhow, the way I been hittin' up the nails these last days." He laughed. "Well, what's the difference?"

"That's what I say. Let the ole lungs go!" And William joined, rather excitedly, in the laughter of his friend, this being the first time either of them had been able to laugh since the preceding Saturday. Their shared laughter, cynical though it was, put them both in a confidential mood. A sense of trusting intimacy possessed them; they had never liked each other so well. Thus, Johnnie said a strange thing.

"Look here, Bill," he said, his manner becoming serious—"I got a mighty funny kind of a notion while she was alone on the stage with that dub there —*you* know. She's so *awful* like her, you know——"

"She certainly is!" said William. "I never saw anything like it. It keeps getting—well, it kind of

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seems to grow on you the more you see her. It certainly is mighty funny!"

"Well, what *I* was thinking," Johnnie went on, "was like this: Of course, it *couldn't* be, but it was so funny the way she does seem to look more and more like *her*, I just thought, 'Well, it would be pretty strange, but what if it *was* her?'"

"Well, sir, I'll tell you something, Johnnie. I was thinkin' just that same way. She didn't look like her at first—and I expect she's prob'ly quite a lot taller and got kind of a different shaped face and all, but——"

"Oh, of course," Johnnie interrupted, "I didn't mean I thought it *was* her; I only meant it seemed funny the way she does *look* like her. It certainly is mighty funny!"

"Yes," William assented, solemnly. "It's one of the funniest things *I* ever came across!"

"It's a good deal in her looks or something," said Johnnie.

"Yes," said William. "And in the way she kind of smiles over her shoulder."

"That fellow that's supposed to be crazy about her," said Johnnie. "He certainly strikes me as a good deal of a dub."

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"Him?" said William. "He makes me sick."

Dreamily they tossed away their vile cigarettes and were back in their places several minutes before the curtain rose upon the last act.

. . . Miss Semple was on the stage. She stood near the back-drop, picking flowers with the embittered funny man of the company, while several other players held a conversation near the footlights. The funny man was still morose about William and Johnnie, and he had been talking about them to Miss Semple between the acts. "I want you to lamp 'em," he said now, as she pinned a flower in his lapel. "Whatever you live for, don't miss those two mugs! I've been trying to wring a laugh out of 'em all evening and it's pretty near queered my stuff. They're about four years old, but they spend their winters on the Riviera, and when their gran'pa wants 'em to play bear they read Browning and tell him to go soak his head. They're on the front row, right back of the bass viol, and when you get that long sit, up there, without any lines, you'll do me a life favour if you'll kindly kick the bass viol over on 'em. They got faces like something the embalmers work with."

Miss Semple was curious enough to comply with

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part of his entreaty, and presently, when she sat near the front of the stage, on the bass-viol side, she allowed her extraordinarily blue eyes to drift along the first row of the audience until they rested upon William and Johnnie. Then she nearly laughed aloud, but her training prevailed over the impulse, so that there was only the faintest visible change in her expression—it was like a look of sudden tenderness. Certainly, however, it was personal; and for that instant both William and Johnnie were admitted to her consciousness. She would have recognized either of them on the street the next day.

William did not perceive that this sapphire look passed on from him to Johnnie; neither did Johnnie perceive that it first rested upon William. When the remarkable thing happened to William he was dazzled, almost dismayed. His breathing stopped instantly: a shock of terrific voltage suspended all animation within him; the universe paused, then gyrated in splendour—and the sapphire glory passed on, leaving him a-tremble.

The first time a thing like this happens to Seventeen, it unquestionably shakes the centres-of-being: William was in a dazed condition when the final

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curtain descended, and so was his companion. They forgot Johnnie's cigarettes on the way home, and neither of them spoke till they had gone more than a block.

"Well—pretty good show," said Johnnie in a voice falsely off-hand.

"It *was* fair," William returned, in like manner.

They said little more, until they paused at Johnnie's gate.

"Well g'night, Silly Bill. Much obliged for takin' me."

"G'night, Johnnie."

"Wait a minute, Bill," Johnnie said, as William turned away. "I was thinkin' about something."

"Well, what?"

"Why, my father owes me three dollars," said Johnnie. "I don't care much about seein' the same show twice m'self, but I haven't got a thing to do to-morrow night, and, if you haven't either, why, I'd just as soon buy a couple seats for us when I'm downtown to-morrow morning—that is, if my father pays me."

"All right," said William. "It's nothin' to me, one way or the other. I just as soon go again if you want to. Better get same seats we had to-night, I

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guess. I'll come around for you about a quarter after seven."

At breakfast, the next morning, Mrs. Baxter asked her preoccupied son if he had enjoyed the play, and, as he seemed not to have understood her question, she repeated it; whereupon he murmured something noncommittal. "But this Miss Millicent Semple," she urged; "everybody says she's quite remarkable. Didn't you think she played well, Willie?"

"I s'pose so," he responded, grudgingly. "I dunno. Oh, I guess she was good enough, prob'ly."

In spite of this carefully guarded admission, his complexion was an affair beyond his control; and his little sister, Jane, was a serious person, interested in all the phenomena of nature, and unusually outspoken.

"Look at Willie, papa," said Jane. "He's gettin' all red. He keeps on gettin' redder—an' *redder*——"

"*Sh*, Jane!" Mrs. Baxter admonished her.

"What for, mamma? I just said that Willie's gettin' all *red*. He——"

"Never mind!"

Jane was always technically obedient, and the tiny episode was closed, though it may have led

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indirectly to another. On Wednesday afternoon Mrs. Baxter took Jane to the matinee, and at dinner that evening Jane again made some remarks disturbing to the peace of her brother. But first she endeavoured in dumb show to urge her mother to some course of action which Jane evidently considered desirable. Whenever she could catch Mrs. Baxter's eye, she nodded significantly at the silent and brooding William, and elaborately formed unvocalized words with her lips: "Go on, mamma!" "Why don't you do it?" and "Do it now!" But Mrs. Baxter shook her head, and by gestures advised Jane to concentrate her attention upon food.

William sat unaware, but the reiterated pantomime, constantly becoming more urgent on the part of Jane, at last attracted the attention of the nominal head of the house.

"What the dickens *is* all this?" Mr. Baxter inquired. "What on earth does Jane want?"

"Nothing," his wife said hastily. "Nothing at all."

"Oh, mamma!" Jane's tone was shocked. "Why, mamma, you *know*——"

"Hush, Jane!"

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"Mamma, you said you'd ask him——"

"But I didn't say *when* I would. Hush, and eat your dinner, Jane."

"Ask who what?" Mr. Baxter demanded, somewhat querulously.

His dutiful daughter turned to him instantly. "Why, I and mamma——"

"Hush, Jane!" Mrs. Baxter interposed, but here she laid herself open to reproach, and was outmanœuvred by the conscientious and determined child.

"Why, mamma, papa asked me a question! I *haf* to answer papa when he asks me somep'm, or else how polite would I be if I didn't, mamma? I guess you wouldn't think I was very nice if, well, s'pose papa said, 'How are you feelin' to-day, Jane?' an' I was to say, 'Hush up, papa!' and wouldn't answer him—because I don't think, if I was to do a thing like that, I couldn't expeck to get that little desk from Becker's an' that silver chain an' locket an' some other presents, three weeks from next Tuesday, when it's my birthday, the fourth of October. I guess papa wouldn't feel like bein' very kind to me then, or Christmas time either, if I said I didn't haf to answer him when he asks me a simple question;

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an' neither would you, mamma. You've told me a hundred thousand times I had to be polite to *ev'ry-body*, an' I ought to be just as polite to papa as any one else."

The rebuked mother hung her head, but Mr. Baxter laughed outright. "What's it all about, Jane?" he asked. "What were you trying to get her to do?"

"Well," said Jane. "I thought she ought to ask Willie. She said she would."

"Ask Willie what?"

"Ask him why he was hidin'," said the terrible Jane. "Ask him why he was hidin' up in the gallery place at the matinee this afternoon."

William started, looked dumfounded for an instant, then indignant, then tragic—but he said nothing.

Mr. Baxter, however, pressed Jane for an explanation; he did not need to press hard.

"He was up there," said Jane. "When the first part of this matinee got finished, and they put the curtain down, there wasn't anything much to do for a while, so I was lookin' around at the people, and way up in the gallery place I saw Willie—you could see his face just as *plain*, papa! He was sittin' down,

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up there, an' well—an' pretty soon he saw mamma an' me, papa, but he didn't think we saw him, an' so he kind of slinked back——"

"I did not!" William burst out, unable to bear such a word. "I did nothing of the kind!"

"—he kind of slinked back, papa," Jane repeated. "An then he *kep'* slinked back so's we couldn't see him again, an' when the matinee let out so's we could go home again, he waited up in the gallery place, or somewheres, till I an' mamma got to the next corner; but we kind of waited around there a minute or two, an' he came out, an' he thought we never saw him, an' he slinked the other way."

"I never heard anything like this in my life!" the outraged William declared. "I want to know if this child is to be allowed to interfere in my private affairs any longer, because if she *is*, I——"

Jane raised her voice. "So mamma said she didn't know why he *behaved* like that, papa. She said he went to this same matinee on Monday night, because she gave him the money; an' she didn't know where he was Tuesday night, but he had a perfeck right to go again this afternoon if he wanted to, so she was goin' to ask him why he wanted to *behave* about it that slinky way, an'——"

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"Jane!" Mrs. Baxter interrupted. "You're talking absurdly. I was only the least bit surprised, and it all amounts to nothing, anyhow. Very possibly William didn't see us, and if he did, he might have had plenty of good reasons for preferring to walk home alone instead of with you and me. I really thought very little about it."

"Mamma, you said——"

"Nonsense!" Mrs. Baxter laughed and turned to William. "I think it was very sensible to go twice to such an amusing play."

The terrible Jane, with calm discourtesy, pointed her right forefinger at her brother. "Look how red Willie gets!" she said.

"Jane!" her mother exclaimed. "You *must* not point."

Jane withdrew the forefinger. "Well, anyway," she said, "look how red he gets!"

"Nonsense!" Mrs. Baxter again exclaimed. "It was a lovely little comedy," she went on, addressing her husband. "I shouldn't mind sitting through it again myself, if I had to. There's the charmingest young actress in it, a Miss Millicent Semple——"

"Mamma!" cried Jane, in a voice of protest. "Why, *she* was the silliest thing! She kep' jig-

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glin' her soldiers—always jigglin' her soldiers, an' jigglin' an' jigglin'——"

"What are you talking about now, Jane?" her father inquired. "What was this, a military play?"

"She means 'shoulders,' not 'soldiers,'" Mrs. Baxter explained. "Miss Semple has a rather coquettish little mannerism of moving her shoulders."

"She jiggles 'em," said Jane. "Always when anybody in this matinee comes around actin' in love of her, she breathes an' jiggles, an' she jiggles her soldiers. She keeps jigglin' an' jigglin' an' ji——"

But William could bear no more. He glared at Jane, and said sternly: "Will you kindly have a care?"

"What?" she asked.

"Will you just kindly have a care?" he repeated.

The phrase was entirely new to Jane, and it interested her. "Have a what, Willie?" she asked, in innocent curiosity.

At this, Mrs. Baxter concealed the lower part of her face behind her handkerchief, but Mr. Baxter was less tactful: he laughed aloud. William had finished his dinner, and he rose in suffering dignity. "This child has always got to be insulting somebody!" he said. "She can't speak of—of the—of anybody—

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with the slightest respect or—or decency. I certainly think if she was my daughter, she'd be raised mighty differently! I will ask to be excused!"

He departed.

"*Now* what's the matter with him?" Mr. Baxter inquired. "I thought after that Miss Pratt left town he'd sort of settle down. What's got into him?"

"He's sensitive," said Mrs. Baxter. "I think he's in a sensitive state; that's all."

"'Sensitive'!" Mr. Baxter grunted. "Well, he'll probably have a chance to get over that in a week or so. I expect the sophomores do a lot more good than they intend, sometimes!"

He was rather grumpy, but presently, in the library, he consented to "lend" William three dollars which William urged that he really needed for "several things."

On Friday evening a similar negotiation was again successful, though Mr. Baxter grumbled. "I don't like to refuse him, it's so near his going away," he said to his wife, when William had left the house and Jane had gone to bed. "But he's acting just as queer as ever, and I don't like his looks. He looks kind of feverish and excited."

"That's natural," she returned. "It's so near

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this great change from home to college life, and he's never been away alone before—not for more than a few days. Of course, he's a little nervous."

Her husband shook his head in perplexity. "I suppose so," he said. "Of course, he isn't still thinking about that Miss Pratt. She's been gone almost a week; I should think he'd forgotten her by this time."

"I suppose he has," said Mrs. Baxter. She was busy with her sewing for a moment; then she added, gently, "Almost."

"How do you mean, 'almost'?"

"Well——" She hesitated, then smiled and went on: "I suppose Miss Pratt was really Willie's 'first love.' It was bound to happen to him; he's at the age when it usually does happen. A boy of seventeen goes around with a sort of fairy coronet in his hand, wanting to put it on some girl's head. If he does, and she goes away, of course the fairy coronet flies back into his hand—though he doesn't know it—because it's never really hers, you see, but always really his. So he's very apt to put it on the next girl he sees, because he's got the habit of looking at somebody wearing it, and so he goes on putting it on one after the other—sometimes all his life——"

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Her voice grew absent, and she paused to thread a needle.

"So it's really 'first love' echoing on through the later loves, you mean," said Mr. Baxter, thoughtfully. "I take it, then, you were merely rebounding from that excellent T. Henry Johnston with the lavender eyes you used to admire so, when you said you'd marry me?"

"No!" she said. "Women aren't like that at all."

"Oh, no!" he laughed. "Of course not! Well, what's happened to Willie and his fairy coronet? You don't mean an actress!"

"Didn't that ever happen to *you?*"

"Go on with you! Is that Willie's present trouble?"

"If I even remotely supposed so," said Mrs. Baxter, "I'd never tell you that I did."

"Why not?"

"Because," she said, "because you might forget, and speak of it before Jane!"

. . . The next day—it was Saturday—after lunch, William borrowed of his mother all the money she was able to find in her purse: seventy-five cents. Then he departed hurriedly, not returning until

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nightfall. At that time she informed him she was again in funds and would be glad to lend him something more if he "happened to care to go anywhere in the evening." He thanked her, but said that he had an engagement with Johnnie Watson, and did not need any money. His manner was strained, and he appeared to wish to add something, but stood silent.

"Go ahead, Willie. What is it, dear?"

"Mother," he said, "I've about made up my mind on—on a—on a course of action——"

He paused.

"All right. What's the course?"

He gulped, then muttered, "I'll tell you to-morrow," and went hastily to his own room.

At the dinner table he spoke not once, nor did Jane feel impelled to call attention to his colour, for he had none. He was pale—and when he went out to keep his engagement with Johnnie Watson, his pallor had not lessened but increased. There was a curious, glinty determination in his eye.

The next morning was rainy, and Mr. Baxter went to church with only solemn Jane; Mrs. Baxter remaining in her own room. Thither came William, still pallid, and found her packing a trunk, moist-eyed.

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"It's yours, dear," she said. "I suppose I oughtn't to, on Sunday; but I want to have you all ready, and not be hurried at the last."

William gulped; the strange determination glinted in his eye—in fact, William looked a little wild.

"Mother," he said desperately, "I'm not going to college."

"What?"

"No, mother, I'm not. My mind is made up. I've changed my—my plans of life. I've changed my plans of life, mother, and I want—I want you to break it to father."

"What *are* you talking about, Willie?"

"I'm not going to college at all," he said. "It's something I couldn't argue about, but I can't help it. I've changed my plans of life."

She sat down on her bed, looking at him with intent thoughtfulness. "Why, dear, you can't——"

"Yes, mother, I can. I'm not going to college."

"But everything's settled about that, Willie! Why, the Dean——"

"Mother, I'm not going."

"But it's imposs——"

"Mother," he said, "I'm going on the stage."

"What!"

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"I'm going on the stage."

She recovered her breath. "Willie, dear," she said, "you're crazy."

"All right; but I'm going to do it!"

"What perfect nonsense!"

"You'll see!" said William huskily. "It's arranged. Johnnie Watson's going to, too. At least, he said he thought he was, last night; and he's going to decide to-day."

"I never heard such——"

"It's arranged, mother."

"'Arranged'?" she echoed. "William, I want you to sit down."

"I can't!" he exclaimed. "I can't sit down!"

"Then try to stand still. Now, William, *who* arranged for you to go on the stage?"

"Mr. Krylie. He's the funny man."

"Yes," she agreed. "I think he must be!"

"I mean in the company," William explained. "He plays that old grass-widower. His name's Krylie—his real name. His name in the play's 'Jonas Lester.' He's the one she pins the flowers in his lapel. He's her most intimate friend of the whole company, and he's the one that's fixed everything up for me, and he's going to do the same for

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Johnnie, if Johnnie decides to go—and he's sure to."

"Decides to go where?"

"Wherever she tells Mr. Krylie to have us join the company. He said maybe Detroit, or Kansas City, or somewhere. He's going to tell us this noon."

"Willie," said his mother, "I do wish you could sit down."

"I can't do it. I feel——"

"Well, never mind then," she said. "But try to tell me something lucid about it. Where did you meet this Mr. Krylie?"

"Mother, I intend to be absolutely honest with you at such a time as this," he said earnestly. "I and Johnnie met him in the Capital Hotel Pool Room."

"Willie!"

"Yes'm. It's right across from the stage-door."

"How could you!" she cried. "How could you go into such a place? There's a bar there, isn't there?"

"It really isn't in the room where the billiard tables are," said William. "It's more in kind of an alcove. I never was in there till yesterday afternoon after the matinee. I went in with Johnnie. He wanted to buy some—well, it was something it

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wouldn't be just fair to Johnnie to tell you about, but it wasn't anything wrong.

"And you found this Krylie there? You spoke to him?"

"Mother, he spoke to *us!*"

"He did?"

"He knew us from having seen us sitting in the front row. He asked us if we weren't the ones that had the seats over by the bass viol every night, and we told him we were."

"How curious! I didn't suppose actors could recognize——"

"Mother, this was the way it was. He was *awful* cordial, and got us to sit down with him at a table and——"

"Willie, you didn't——"

"I want to tell you just exactly what happened, so you can break it to father," William went on, with a solemnity which increased throughout his narrative. "He did ask us if we cared to take anything, and Johnnie took some ginger ale and I took some sarsaparilla. Well, he said—mother, he said what first called his attention to us was—it was Miss Millicent Semple, mother. The very first night, she came over and sat in a chair right by us, and—and I noticed

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that she looked right down at—at us. Well, she did that every night, and Mr. Krylie said she's been lookin' at both of us most all the time. He said she came over and sat in that chair on purpose, and it wasn't in the play for her to sit there at all. He said she told him about us, and so he got to noticing us, and what he liked about us was the way we never laughed, or anything. He said he'd been watchin' us, night after night, when all the rest of the audience'd be laughing—and we never were. He said that his part was really meant to be kind of serious, and it made him pretty near sick the way everybody laughed at it, and he said he took a fancy to us from the first because he saw we didn't; and he'd like to do some favour for us, if there was anything we could think of. And he said, oh, yes, wouldn't we like to be introduced to Miss Millicent Semple. He said she had a rule never to be introduced to anybody that wasn't on the stage, and he s'posed we'd have to go on the stage if we wanted her to have anything much to do with us. And then he went on about how often she'd noticed us, and how she told him she thought we looked sort of like actors, and how she said we ought to be on the stage, just from noticing us so much and all. Well, he said to meet him right

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by the ticket-office at the station to-day, because the company's going away to-day; and he said he'd probably be there by noon and he'd tell us what to do, and everything. He said—mother, he said we ought to join the company next week."

"Willie!"

"Yes'm. At first I thought he was jokin' or something, and so did Johnnie; but he showed us he was in dead earnest. Mother, the manager of the company was in there, and he called the manager over and introduced *him* to us; and he told him all about us, and said he'd just about talked us into joining the company."

"What did the manager say, Willie?"

"He said he'd try to get a couple of new parts put into the play for us to act."

"He did!"

"He said they'd be small ones, at first," William admitted, "but Mr. Krylie said he was goin' to leave this company in about a month or so, and by that time Johnnie and I would know enough to play his part, and one of us could take it."

Mrs. Baxter frowned, bit her lip in some perplexity; then she looked long at her son. Compassion appeared in her eyes.

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"Willie," she said, "don't you think this man was fooling you?"

"We thought so at first, kind of," he answered. "But after he got to talkin' and brought up that manager and all, we saw he was in dead earnest. He *was*, mother: you'd know he was in a minute if you'd been there."

"And you——"

"Mother, I've made up my mind. I—I pretty *near* have, anyhow. I told Johnnie I'd let him know this morning."

"When are you to meet Mr. Krylie?"

"At noon. He said for us to wait for him if he wasn't on time. I got to go now, mother."

"You don't expect to leave with the company to-day, do you?"

"Oh, no'm; he's only goin' to tell us when we ought to join 'em and how to get there—if we decided to do it."

"Very well," she said. "Go along—but don't wait down there till after two o'clock, dear. We have dinner at two to-day."

"All right," he said. "And about papa——"

"William, suppose you let me wait till to-night before I break it to him."

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"Well——"

"Let me choose my own time for that, dear."

"All right, but——" He went to the door. "Well, good-bye, mamma," he said.

"Be *sure* not to wait later than two o'clock for Mr. Krylie, dear!" she called after him.

"All right!" he returned rather impatiently, for he felt there was something curious in the comparative placidity with which she had borne this crucial interview. Misgivings had risen within him: almost he suspected that he had been led into something queer by Mr. Krylie's eloquence—but sapphire eyes sparkled before him, shooting blue to his own eyes. He seized his hat, and plunged out of the house, tingling. Mr. Krylie's last words had promised pleasant mysteries. It might be—it *might* be that Millicent Semple would be at the station, too, waiting.

So much can sapphire eyes from beyond the glamouring footlights do to Seventeen! And so excellent a comedian was the detestable Krylie!

. . . William was home again at a little before two; he parted from a sickish-looking Johnnie Watson at the corner.

"*One* thing," said Johnnie, "I bet *she* never put

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that ole scuff up to all those lies he told us. I bet she didn't know a thing about it."

"She *did* keep lookin' at me—lookin' at us, I mean," said William. "That much was true. She did—every night."

"Yes—she did!" Johnnie sighed. "Every single night!"

Mrs. Baxter, from an upper window, beheld the slow return of her son, and descended to meet him. Sympathetic questioning produced an account of events. At half-past one o'clock a ticket-agent at the station, upon being pressed for information, had been able to recall that the "Lucy On Leave" company had left the town at eleven-fifty the night before.

Three days later William Sylvanus Baxter and Johnnie Watson sat in the smoking compartment of their sleeper. They smoked, and discussed the seeming character of a new acquaintance, a youth who had just left them and gone into the dining-car. Conversation had developed the information that he was accredited to the same university that they were, and would shortly be their classmate. Thus stimulated to confidence, he had brought forth

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from his breast pocket the photograph of a young woman; also exhibiting a reduced copy of the same photograph inside his watch. She was (he informed them) the dearest little girl in *this* world, and he had left her looking pretty funny on the platform of the station where he had taken the train.

"That girl in his ole photographs," said Johnnie coldly, when the confidential young gentleman had gone, "she struck me she looked more like a rabbit than a girl. He's kind of soft, I think."

William nodded gravely. "The way *I* look at that, Johnnie," he said, removing the vile cigarette from his mouth, and watching this gesture with quiet approbation—"the way I look at that, Johnnie, why, I tell you it strikes me there's some fellows that think too much about girls. Always seem to have some ole girl or other on their minds!"

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THE SECOND NAME

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THE SECOND NAME

THE wide midland landscape, wooded with walnut and beech and elm and hickory, and intertraced with silver where sycamores followed the creek, was so kindly that the Indian gave it a musical name, meaning "Pleasant Murmurs," though there was no waterfall near, and the creek was slow and still. The murmurs were only the little sounds that a forest makes in summer.

The settlers changed the name to "Fair Lands" after they plowed their clearings and had corn growing and cattle in the meadows. The fair lands were fertile; a nucleus of tavern and farmers' warehouse developed among the scattered cabins; the cabins became farmhouses, and, in place of the rough nucleus, a little market-town with a church, a doctor, and four saloons appeared. They called it Fairlands City.

In 1867 Fairlands City had two banks, a weekly paper, a "hotel," a livery-stable, a lumber-yard, a brick-yard, a tannery, five churches, eight doctors,

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nine saloons, eleven lawyers, and a tintype studio. The tintype man was elected to Congress, and in his honour they changed the name to Vreedersburgh.

Surviving not only this but the collapse of '73—for from the first the place had abnormal vitality—the market-town grew ever the more ambitious: it offered "locations" to factories, and got them; it got pork-houses and breweries, and another railroad. It became a "railroad centre" and a manufacturing town, and, assuming the ways of a city, had noisy corners, footpads, orphan asylums, both white and coloured, genuine red light, and exorbitant prosperity.

Burning soft coal, it smeared itself over the landscape as a soot-spot smears itself over a clean face. The forest was gone; and the sky was gone; the creek was gone; sliming through tunnels and under culverts, it had become a sewer. And where the pleasant murmurs had stirred the under side of leaves, steam whistles screamed, drays thundered, and draymen cursed. Still the big soot-spot spread, its rough circumference inexorably creeping upon the farms; and if you looked down upon it from an aeroplane, you saw a horrible thing.

You saw hundreds and hundreds of mouths pro-

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jected into the air at you, vomiting black destruction. You saw the soot falling back upon the people who made it, fouling and suffocating them, making them cough; making more hideous the great nondescript buildings where they did their business, streaking and smudging the wide confusion of shoddy houses where they ate and slept and kept the begrimed women and children. Through the dim and dirty air you made out the fringes of the town, the shacks standing in little yards, or mudholes, where chickens and pigs groped in the factory smoke. And if you flew low enough over the streets, you saw the people, all of them dirty, most of them in a hurry, and all wearing dark clothes made into the ugliest and most serviceable shapes.

These hustling souls were boisterously content with their own way of life, and they loved their money-making city. When Harley Otis was elected mayor, the name Vreedersburgh meant more than a hundred thousand people, their ideals, and all their works.

Harley Otis was young, but he had already proved himself to be a devoted Vreedersburgher, and it was to his reputation as a patriot that he owed his election. Two breweries always fought each other

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for the "mayoralty." When the Göritz brewery won, the saloon-keepers were not allowed to sell Hanlon beer; if any of them persisted, the mayor would make his chief of police compel those saloon-keepers to obey the law, and thus be devastated by privileged competition. Contrariwise, when the Hanlon brewery elected a mayor, all the saloon-keepers who sold Göritz beer had to close at eleven o'clock and on Sunday. And in the red light, also, there was harrying and raiding until the people who sold beer in that quarter had learned which brewery owned the mayor. But Harley Otis was made mayor by neither of the breweries: he was nominated and elected by the banks.

The bankers were tired of the kind of men the breweries elected, so they made the breweries and the politicians understand that it was about time for a business administration, and they forced the nomination and election of Harley Otis. The breweries and their dependents acquiesced without bitterness. Of course there would have to be a little persecution here and there to satisfy the better element and boost the prosecutor's fees; but everybody knew that Harley Otis was no crazy reformer, mad upon indiscriminate raiding and badger-

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ing. He was a patriot, and would not do anything to hurt the town.

He was an enthusiast. He could not speak the name "Vreedersburgh" without emotion, and his ambition for the city became a passion in him from the day of his inauguration. Consulting with the Chamber of Commerce, he organized a club to boom Vreedersburgh. This club sent postals to factory-owners everywhere:

> Are you thinking of changing your location? If so, have you investigated Vreedersburgh? Shall we send one of our members to you to explain what Vreedersburgh will be glad to do for you? You need not meet us halfway· we will do it all.

They took a special train, with Harley for orator, and went up and down the land, carrying with them a plaster relief-map, almost white, of Vreedersburgh, to use for a table decoration at the banquets which were given in their honour.

They did all the convincing and flamboyant things their energy could devise; but at their joint banquet with the Chamber of Commerce, on a March evening in the first year of Harley's administration, it was discovered that there was one important thing which they had not done—had not even thought of,

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until the president of the club suggested it in his speech. This was to find a second name for Vreedersburgh.

"Gentlemen," he said—and his manner was profoundly earnest—"gentlemen, we must have it! As San Francisco is known as the Golden Gate, as New Orleans is known as the Crescent City, as Philadelphia is known as the City of Brotherly Love, as Chicago is known by her stern but uplifting motto, 'I Will,' as Minneapolis and St. Paul are known far and wide as the Twin Metropoli of the North, and as Boston is known as the Hub of the Universe, gentlemen, so must Vreedersburgh be known by a second name which shall be at once a sobriquet and a motto. Our city is not yet so large, perhaps, as some of those I have mentioned, but if we can discover a synonym expressing what *we* know her to be, then, gentlemen, the noise of our adoption of that synonym as Vreedersburgh's second name will go over this broad land, from the dreamy Atlantic island of Porto Rico to where the blue Philippines swim in the long Pacific roll; from the frozen marches of the boisterous Yukon to the torrid cliff-dwellings of Arizona! Nothing, gentlemen, nothing on this *earth* so advertises and makes known the character

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and virtues of a town as a second name, such as I have indicated! Gentlemen, such a name must be found, to couple with the name of Vreedersburgh. Gentlemen, the thing MUST be done! I leave the thought in your minds. My wish is that it will sink deep. I thank you!"

The applause came sharply upon the instant; it was convincing and serious—the solid and prolonged sound made by patriots enthusing in a new resolve. It left room for no doubt that the orator had his wish: his thought was already deep in every mind; deepest of all in the mind of Harley Otis.

He walked home alone, rejecting offers of company upon the way, because he wished to concentrate his mind. Enthusiast that he was, he had determined to be the discoverer of the immortal word or phrase—that perfect second name for Vreedersburgh, which would indeed, as another orator had prophesied, "send the grand old city of Vreedersburgh crashing down the ages with her head up and her tail over the dashboard!"

Harley Otis believed that the right word, if discovered, might easily double the population within ten years. Glory would rest forever upon the man who discovered it, and thus glorified his city. Harley

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was the mayor, and the city was peculiarly his to glorify; none else should be its second godfather.

He lay awake that night, while symbolic words and groups of words paraded before his mind's eye. He pictured them upon letter-heads, upon sign-posts, upon transparencies and banners in procession and pageant; and he saw them in stone above the great doorway of the prospective new City Hall; but they were all wrong, and he found no second name for Vreedersburgh that night. In the morning he woke to a jumbled mind, his discards of the night tumbling pell-mell through his head in company with many new ones, all preposterous.

But he was the persistent enthusiast, not the flare-up; and he went for his morning ride in a profound preoccupation, resolved to let no thought distract him from his high pursuit. This morning ride was one of the things which he considered part of his duty to himself and Vreedersburgh. The mayor must be kept in condition or the business administration would suffer. However, he did not rise to the trot, and his selection of a riding costume permitted his long trousers to ruck up over his shoe-tops, so that his riding was inoffensive to the voters.

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With eyes fixed upon the black mane of his bay mare, he rode slowly, this morning, the full length of Vreedersburgh's "best residence street." Now and then a sharp little March gust would whirl up a dust cloud from the asphalt and decorate the unheeding horseman with flinty particles, bacilli, hairs from dead cats and rats and dogs, shreds of feather and bits of dead birds, and remnants of all else that had lain upon the street since September, when the last street-cleaner had been officially conducted to his annual hibernation. It was no part of a business administration to waste money trying to keep streets clean from September until May. However, the bodies of dead animals, if of noticeable size, were usually removed when their special department was summoned by a citizen.

To the eye of a stranger, the houses upon this best street of Vreedersburgh were all of a dreadful appearance, though among them were several gloomily exhibiting symptoms of architecture. There were others that should have shown a cheerful countenance, being newly built, or freshly painted during the past year; but they were as stricken as the rest. Each succeeding snow had turned black with the soot that became a great part of its body; and this soot-

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snow, melting to a thinnish ink, had flowed and trickled, and congealed again, and melted again, upon these houses; and soot-laden rain had frozen upon their faces, until those bedraggled faces now were like the faces of negro minstrels in a half stage of make-up. But they lacked all gaiety of the minstrel; rather, these houses were like haggard patients, not yet convalescent after racking illness. And they stood in leprous enclosures of besooted bare earth where lingered a few patches of sparse grass not yet slain by the acids in the smoke.

A girl came out of one of the houses as the mayor rode by, and in her hand she held a new, white tennis-ball, just from the box. She rolled it across the "lawn" for a pointer to retrieve. He brought it to her, gray.

The mayor reached a dead little park at the upper end of this street, and for an instant he glanced up appreciatively at the statue there: "Peter J. Vreeder" was the name carved on the colossal granite pedestal, shaped like a mountain. The statue was faithfully the size of tintyping, bald, chin-bearded Peter in life, and it looked lonely, so high in the air and upon such a deserted vastness of granite. It looked cold, too, though Peter was solidly dressed in a deformed

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frock coat and cylindrical trousers. This dumfounding thing was of native stone, and had been carved by a native sculptor or stonecutter, maker of most of the monuments in the cemetery beyond the little dead park. Vreedersburgh was proud of him, for his design, now everlastingly realized, had won the decision in a competition wherein Macmonnies and O'Connor had taken part.

Moreover, the successful monument man's brother-in-law's brother (who was chairman of the Commission of Award) shared the family talent; and it was he who had designed the granite mountain or pedestal. At first, the colour of the stone figure was thought not to harmonize prettily with the colour of the granite; but the kindly universal soot had soothed this disturbance, for both Peter and his pedestal were now so blotched and smeared and murked and blackened that few could detect a difference in their texture. And Harley Otis, like the rest of Vreedersburgh, was proud of Vreedersburgh's one work of plastic art.

As he rode by, he knew a moment of excitement in the thought that perhaps some day *he* might stand, likewise grand and lonely in a stone frock coat, at the other entrance of that dead little park. Such a

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thing was far from unlikely—expecially if he found the second name for Vreedersburgh.

Still concentrating fiercely upon his problem, he came to the fringe of the town; and here he rode between slattern tenements where children coughed in the smoke-fog, and murky women, waving gray dish-towels, urged them schoolward. Farther on, the mare was fetlock deep in mud; pavements of pitted asphalt and worn brick gave way to sloughs, houses and tenements to rough shacks and to shelters built of tin and stolen canvas, where apathetic faces stared from windows never glazed.

Then came the city dump-heaps, a range of low hills of refuse: necropolis of a million cold and collapsed tin cans; and here a few dark human figures groped, shawl over head, hoping to find among the million one can not emptied of all its fruit or corn or fish.

Beyond this was a railroad, with its freight-yards, not grimier than other places; but, after that, the mare came to a thinner, purer air, and the road, not so heavily rutted by the teams, began to grow firmer under foot. A little farther, and she was bearing her rider through the open country.

He still rode preoccupied. For a time he failed

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even to notice that he had left the town behind. Usually he did not come this far, he preferred to ride within his city's purlieus. Unlike Douglas, he loved better to hear the mouse squeak than the lark sing; the city was his country. But this morning the mare had her way of it, and she had carried the rapt Harley three miles beyond the city boundary before he was roused to take other than the dreamiest cognizance of his surroundings.

What roused him was the sound of a fiddle. He straightened himself, pushed up the brim of his soft hat, and looked about him. The mare had left the road for the open gate of a ten-acre pasture, had crossed the pasture, and now, with lowered head, as the absently slacked rein permitted, was nuzzling the short grass bordering a path through a thicket.

Forty feet to his right Harley caught the gleam of a creek, glimpsed through the leafless bushes and saplings of its hither bank, and upon the still water was winter's last touch—just the barest skim of ice, thin as thin paper. But there were suspicions of green among the gray blades the mare was nuzzling; across the creek, uproarious robins made public announcement that a willow-tree had come to life; overhead was a blue bowl of sky, brighter blue than

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midsummer; and among the frosted reeds at the creek's edge stood a little naked boy playing a fiddle.

This pagan figurine, sketched in ivory against a tapestry of underbrush and brown water, was no wood-creature nor little Pan, but a true boy, as he proceeded to demonstrate.

His back was toward the mayor, and, just as the latter looked up to discover the source of the disturbing music, the boy set his fiddle upon the ground, lifted his thin arms above his head, palm to palm, and dived into the creek through the scum of ice. He repented this, as he made evident when his head emerged. After giving the briefest possible imitation of a spouting gargoyle, he howled bloody murder.

Harley dropped from his saddle and ran to the water's edge; but the boy could swim well enough—he struck out for shore with agonized vigour.

"Oh, *gosh!*" he said, as in shallow water he rose and pranced to the land.

"What's the matter with you?" the mayor demanded angrily.

"That water's *cold!*" the boy announced.

"You ought to be whipped!" Harley exclaimed. "You ought to know better! What were you doing with that fiddle?"

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"P-playin' it," the boy replied, hopping and shivering. "I thought I'd see if I dairst go in swimmin' through the i-hi-ice, an' I took my clo'es off an' I felt so cold I just played one tut-tune to kind o' warm me up be-fore I went in—an', *ooh!* I'm froze!"

"You're a truant," the mayor said sternly. "Aren't you a truant?"

The boy hung his shaking head; he stood shuddering, huddling his pipe-stem arms, and rubbing what should have been the calves of his legs together; he shook so hard that he was like a figure on a joggled film.

"Aren't you a truant?"

"S-s-sir?"

"You ought to be arrested by the truant officer," Harley began. "You have no business to be out of——"

But he was interrupted by a voice which called to him peremptorily from a distance.

"Rub him!" it called. "Don't stand there *talkin'* to him! Rub him!"

Harley looked over his shoulder and beheld the figure of a girl. She had just emerged from an empty corn-crib at the edge of the pasture, and stood

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with her back properly toward the mayor and the glistening truant; but she was one of those remarkable people who can gesticulate with their backs turned. In fact, she was waving both arms, and it was obvious to Harley Otis that she was waving them angrily at himself.

To emphasize this effect, "Rub him, you dummy!" she shouted. "Haven't you got sense enough to *rub* him!"

Much offended, and yet cowed, as all men are when women become derisive, Harley ridiculously took his handkerchief from his pocket and turned to the boy. But the latter was no longer within reach; he had fled to the bush, already his boudoir for the disrobing; and, wet as he was, his too visible ribs became invisible in the shroudings of a man's old shirt, and in the twinkling of an eye he had capered into his knickerbockers. Forthwith, he seated himself upon the ground for purposes connected with stockings and shoes.

"Are you rubbin' him?" shouted the distant girl. "Haven't you got sense enough to rub him?"

"How can I?" the mayor called testily. "I'd like to know how anybody's going to rub him when he's already got three-fourths of his clothes on!"

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At that she turned and came running. "What'd you let him put 'em on for, before he'd had a rubbin'?" she demanded. "Do you *want* him to get pneumonia?" And as Harley uttered the first sound of an attempted reply, she cut him off instanter. "Don't stand around! Listen to his *teeth!* Don't you know enough to build a fire?"

Harley bestirred himself resentfully, but none the less with energy. He tied his mare to a sapling, and brought sticks and dead wood, while the girl heaped dry leaves and twigs into a little pile; so that the fire was burning by the time the boy had tied the makeshift strings with which his shoes were laced.

"Here, you!" The peremptory damsel thus hailed the swimmer. "You get as close to this fire as you can without burnin' your clothes off o' you. You want to die?" And, as he obeyed, she held his jacket close to the increasing flames until it was warm, then put it upon him. "You want to die?" she repeated crossly. "*Here!* What's the matter with you, anyway? You *crazy?*"

The question seemed fairly reasonable, for the boy, after standing a moment by the fire, darted without explanation into the underbrush. He had only gone for his fiddle, however, and he returned

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with the instrument in a covering of old green cloth.

"You sit down," said the girl. "Not on the *ground!* What you doin'? Sit down on them sticks and put your feet to the fire. If your feet get right hot the rest of you's pretty sure to be warm. But you keep the rest of you as close to the fire as you can, anyhow."

Harley Otis, considerably outraged in spirit, began to recover his poise; and the more of it he recovered, the more magisterially he regarded his chance companions. The boy was about eleven; and his hat, like his shirt, had been a man's. His shoes continued this harmony: they also were adult. The shoes wept with the wetness within them; the hat was a terrible relic, based upon that design sometimes malignantly attributed to an Earl of Derby.

This was a town boy; both his attire and his pallor denied that he was of the country.

Neither was the young woman a thing of buttermilk and apples. Sallowness and a murky suffering beneath the eyes claimed her for Vreedersburgh, though she was broad-shouldered, vigorous, and not uncomely. She was less shabby than the boy, yet her shabbiness was sufficient. Her hat, her

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cloak, and her dress were all old, of no discernible mode, and had been cheap when they were new. Just now they looked as if she had slept in them. She had.

The mayor addressed her severely. "You seem to understand that going in swimming at this time of year is dangerous," he said. "What did you let him do it for?"

"What did I let——" she repeated, and stopped, astonished.

"Did he run away from you?" Harley inquired.

"Good gracious!" she cried. "I never saw this boy before in my life. I thought he was *your* boy—until he put his clothes on. I heard a fiddle and then a hollerin' and a splashin'; and I saw you just standin' around *talkin'* to him, instead o' havin' sense to r——"

At this point Harley decided that he owed it to himself to turn his back upon her. "What's your name?" he asked the boy.

"My name's Ben."

"What's your last name?"

"I guess it's Pritchard."

"What do you mean by 'guessing' it's Pritchard?"

"Well," said Ben, "it's like this. First I was in

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the orphan asylum, an' my name was Ben Pritchard. Then a woman took me, an' I had her name; it was Kyle. But she sent me back to the asylum again, 'cause she got run over by a nottamabeel speeder, an' when she got well she hadn't only one leg, an' couldn't run after me. So then a man an' his wife took me, an' I was named same as them; I was named Ben Gower. Well, an' then Mr. Gower he had a little groc'ry, but the trouble was, he *owned* the propaty; an' they put a asphelt street in front of it an' a brick street to the side of it; an' they made him pay fer all that asphelt an' brick; an' taxed him an' taxed him; an' he had to give up the groc'ry; an' his wife died, an' he drank a while an' c'mitted suacide last year. So I guessed my first name maybe was the right one after all: Pritchard. But I ain't sure."

"Why aren't you in school?"

"I don't b'long to no school."

"Why not?"

Ben removed his cavernous hat and passed his hand over his wet head reflectively. "Well," he said, "when Mr. Gower went an' hung himself I didn't have no place to go. I expected I was too old to go back to the orphan asylum; so Mr. Gower he'd

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taught me to fiddle some, an' I just went around the saloons fiddlin'. People in saloons are apt to be mighty good-hearted. I expeck I made as much as sellin' papers. Anyways, I shore seen some good fights!"

The mayor flushed slightly. "You may need a month or two at the reform school," he said.

"Yes, sir," Ben returned meekly. "I thought they might git me; they already got four o' the crowd I run with. That's why I quit the ole smoke-stack."

"What are you talking about?" Harley asked impatiently.

"Vreedersburgh," said Ben. "I says to myself, 'What's the use stayin' here?' I says. 'I don't see nothin' to stay *fer*,' I says. So I left, this morning."

"Do you know who I am?"

"Yes, sir. I had a friend o' mine hauled up in police court oncet this year, an' I seen you settin' there givin' 'em what's what, right an' left! Yes, sir; you're the mayor."

"All right," said the mayor. "You'll march straight back!"

But at this the girl burst into sudden loud laughter.

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"*You* can't make him go back!" she said harshly, as the mayor turned to her in frowning surprise. "It's outside the city limits, and you got no more authority over him than one o' them robins across the crick has! Besides, when you look what you're doin' to *me*, I should think you'd see it's kind o' ridiculous for you to talk about makin' anybody go back to Vreedersburgh!"

"What do you mean by what I'm doing to *you?*" Harley demanded.

"Why, don't you know?" she cried. "My name's Milly Cross."

"I never saw you before," said Harley. "I don't remember ever hearing your name."

The mouth of Milly Cross opened, the eyes of Milly Cross became large and staring. "That's the awfullest thing I ever heard!" she said. "Can you do a thing like that to a person and then not even *know* her the very next day?"

Ben Pritchard at once looked upon her with the brightest interest. "What you done?" he inquired eagerly.

"Nothin'!" cried Milly.

"'Course!" said Ben, prompt to be a gentleman. "I mean, what was you up for?"

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"He knows!" she answered with a quick nod of her head at the mayor.

"No, I don't," he responded, still puzzled, his official mood somewhat relaxed. "We've had more than a hundred cases in police court this week."

"Mine took all of three minutes," said Milly.

"What was the charge against you?"

"I was hauled up with another girl," Milly told him darkly. "Her name was Dessing. Mabel Dessing."

"Look here!" urged little Ben Pritchard. "What *was* you up for?"

Milly stared fiercely at the eyes of the mayor. "For bein' a 'bad character'!" she said.

"Mabel Dessing." Harley repeated. "Yes, I remember. So you were the woman with her, were you?" He became more magisterial as he spoke; his glance was ominous. "I thought I told you to *leave* Vreedersburgh."

"I have left!"

"You understood me well enough," he said. "I meant on a train, and you know it. You'd better not be caught inside the city limits."

"Don't be afraid; I won't be!" she returned with her bitter stare still sharp upon his eyes. "I don't know just how you expected me to take a train,

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though. I didn't have a cent on earth. Not after I got out o' your court-room, I didn't!"

"That's not my affair."

"When I walked out o' your court," said Milly, "I walked on straight up the street and out o' your blame town. I walked till I got to this pasture here, and it was comin' on dark. I slept in that corn-crib yonder. Pretty soon I'm goin' on again; but I'll go where I want to. *You* can't order me! Not a step! You did all you're ever goin' to, to me, Mr. Otis, yesterday when you ruined my character in that court-room o' yours!"

He laughed a short, bored laugh. "Your 'character'?" he said tolerantly.

"You look here!" she cried. "You just be careful! I don't want to hit you, but I will, if you say anything like that again! You listen to me!"

"Oh, I'll 'listen'!" he said.

"All right, then," said Milly Cross. "I guess I'll just make you know what you *did*, now I got the chance."

"Go on," the mayor returned. "Do!"

His tone and manner were of a skepticism still official, yet not altogether unkindly; and she took him at his word.

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"Well, I come to Vreedersburgh from Boonville," Milly began. "It was about three years ago. I had to leave Boonville——"

"Ah!" said the mayor. "So you had to leave Boonville, too, did you?"

She took a furious step toward him.

"*Say!*" little Ben warned her. "Look out! You don't want to muss it up with no mayor!"

Milly choked. "I never laid a hand on nobody in my life," she said huskily. "But I been feelin' for a couple days like it was time to begin, and I guess if I do begin he's the right one to begin on!" She choked again, then shouted in Harley's face: "I got folks down in Boonville good as what *you* got in *your* town!"

"I don't doubt it," he said. "What about yourself?"

"I left there because I had trouble with my *fella!*" she cried, her fury not abating. "Is that any of your business?"

"Not at all," Harley returned promptly. "My business is only to see that you keep out of Vree——"

"Then I'll just tell you what it was!" Milly cut him off. "He took a job as a bartender down at the Boonville Hotel, and I says if I didn't have no more

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influence with him than that, I'd quit him; and I hoped that'd make him give up the job—but instead he got mad and took to goin' with another girl that I hated and hated me. I couldn't stand seein' 'em around together; I saw I was goin' to be *sick* if I stayed there much longer. That's why I had to leave Boonville, you mayor, you!"

"All right," he said. "That all you wanted to tell me?"

"You know better," she contented herself with retorting quietly; and went on: "I come up to Vreedersburgh, and got a job in Baker's canning factory, six dollars and a half a week. Well, this Mabel Dessing was the girl that worked next to me, and her and I got on right good; so after while we hired a room together. We put our wages together, too, and that made thirteen a week; it goes farther that way than what six and a half does for one. We got along first-rate."

Harley showed some interest. "Certainly you could," he said. "I've always claimed that six dollars and a half a week——"

"Wait!" she interrupted. "*I'm* tellin' *you!* Here, along about last January we heard there was goin' to be trouble in the factory for us hands."

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"Oh, no," said Harley. "There's been no strike or trouble of any kind at the Baker cannery. I own stock there, and I ought to know."

"I reckon you ought to," she agreed, "but you don't. It was this way. Seems the church people, or somebody like that, had went and got up a big investigation about bad girls that worked in stores and factories, and they were givin' a hard name to any place that paid girls less than eight dollars a week. Well, our factory didn't want to get a hard name, so the bosses worked things out like this: they says, 'When them committees come around here investigatin' we want to show 'em that the girls that work for *us* don't haf to do nothin' bad to make a livin' outside of the six and a half they get from the cannery. We'll show 'em that all our girls got homes they live in, and live with their own families, and only work in the cannery to make something on the side, kind of—to help out at home, or maybe just to have their own pocket money, for pitcher shows and so on.' That's the way they figured it out when they saw the investigation was goin' to get around to them. About half the girls did live at home with their families anyway so the factory just discharged the rest of us—the ones that didn't

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have no homes—and filled up our places with new hands that did."

"I see," Harley said, nodding. "They couldn't do much else, under the circumstances. They're bound to the stockholders to be economical, of course."

"Oh, I'm not blamin' anybody for that," said Milly Cross. "Everybody's got to lose their *job* now and then. I and Mabel had some money to go on; we'd saved twenty-six dollars, and there was even five of it left when we got arrested, night before last. By that time I knew about Mabel as well as *you* seemed to when you had us up before you. I found out two, three months before we got discharged from the cannery. Fellas spoke to her kind o' funny sometimes when we'd be on the way to the room after work; and there was a couple o' girls come to see her; she couldn't fool me about *them*.

"Well, and so I told her I suspicioned her; and she got to cryin', and told me all about it. She'd lived down in the Red Light from the time she was sixteen till she was twenty, and then she got converted or something; anyway, she reformed and got a job at the cannery a little before I come there.

"Well, I felt kind o' like not havin' anything more

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to do with her after that, and there was a week or so when I couldn't make up my mind what to do. She kep' beggin' me every night when we got home to say I wasn't goin' to quit her; and I wouldn't answer yes or no. I suspicioned she kind of had a touch o' T. B., too; and that made me want to get rid of her; but she told me if I broke up the room she'd feel so bad she couldn't help goin' to the dogs again. So at last I said I'd stay; and we quit talkin' about it."

Little Ben Pritchard, who listened with entire comprehension, nodded approvingly. "You're all right!" he said. "I know that Mabel Dessing. I was a messenger a while, when Mr. Gower had me; an' I used to carry notes to Mabel Dessing. She give me a quarter, mostly."

"She didn't give no quarters away for notes while we were at the cannery," said Milly Cross grimly. "She took it awful hard when we lost our jobs. The whole first week she just laid around the room and cried and took on. I didn't see then why she made such a fuss, but now I reckon it was because she kind o' suspicioned that the discouragement was liable to drive her back to the life she used to lead. I couldn't drag her out with me lookin' for a job, but I got some sewin' to bring home. We weren't

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neither of us much good for sewin'—our work at the cannery had kind o' spoiled our hands for it—and we only made two dollars and forty-five cents between us the whole time we were at it. So about the end of last month she took to goin' out alone; said she was willin' to go job-huntin', after all. Then one night when she come back to the room I noticed whisky on her. We had a lot o' trouble over it, and after we'd been talkin' and cryin' a good while, she got up all of a sudden and went out. I never saw her again till night before last."

"I did," said little Ben. "I seen her last week. She had a room at the Buffet Hotel."

"She come to the room about seven o'clock, night before last," Milly went on. "She was all wet with the rain, and coughin', and scared to death. She told me how it was: the prosecutor gets fees for all the prosecutions by him and his deputies, she says; but if the cops don't raid around some and arrest a lot o' people the prosecutor don't make much, so of course the prosecutor has to do the right thing by the cops. Well, the people that don't want to get arrested, they do the right thing by the cops, too; and sometimes the cops do one way a while, and then they turn round and do the other. Well, Mabel was in bad trouble,

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because, she says, the cops and the prosecutor had got friendly again; and the cops were bound to do a lot of arrestin' to make fees for the prosecutor. I reckon you know all about that, Mr. Otis."

"Go on," said the mayor.

"Well, she was awful scared. She says the cops would do all the arrestin' at first just around among girls like her that was all alone, because the other people had more influence and paid regular. And she says she was liable to get in pretty bad with the cops, because she'd been havin' some beer with a fella, a couple days before, at Wechsel's, and he got pretty drunk and went home, and she found a ten-dollar bill on the chair where he'd been sittin', an' kep' it."

"Yes," said Harley, smiling faintly. "That sounds familiar!"

"It was new to *me!*" Milly returned sharply. "I believed her, and it was true. It doesn't matter much whether it was or not, the way I see it: you'd 'a' given her what you did, either way, wouldn't you?"

"I suppose so."

"I guess you do! Well, she was awful scared, because she'd heard afterwards that this fella was in politics, and she knew if he made a holler about his

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ten-dollar bill she'd be in big trouble. So she went back to Wechsel's and left the money for the fella, if he asked about it; but Wechsel told her that wouldn't probably help her none, because the cops were goin' to pull all her kind anyhow. She told me she was afraid she'd kill herself if she got arrested—but she didn't! I still had a five-dollar bill that was half of it hers, from when we saved money out of our wages, and, after she quieted down, and her clothes got dry, I told her to come along; we'd go get some supper, and I'd let her have her part of the five.

"We didn't get any supper. Just as we opened the cafeteria door somebody jerked us both back out on to the sidewalk. It was two men in rubber coats had hold of us. They kep' us there in the rain, with people stoppin' and havin' a fine time starin' at us under their umbrellas till the patrol-wagon come. And a fine night we had of it in your jail, Mr. Otis! Just before we were shoved into your court in the morning a man that said he was a lawyer took our five-dollar bill and kind o' mumbled something when we were called up. That's all he did for the five dollars; I couldn't even tell what he said. Then this politician swore Mabel had stole the ten from him, because Wechsel had never give it to him. Mabel

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told you that, but you wouldn't pay no attention; you were too busy hurryin' folks off to the workhouse and back to jail, or to the reform school——"

"Tut, tut!" said Harley. "The Dessing girl got what she deserved. Why didn't you speak up then, and tell me a little of what you're telling me now about yourself?"

"Why didn't I *tell* you?" she cried incredulously. "You wouldn't listen; you wouldn't hear a word from me! I started to say something, and that big cop stopped me; he swore I was Mabel's 'running-mate,' he says; and how Mabel had been a 'police character' for six years. He says they couldn't prove I was with her at the time she stole the ten dollars, and was willin' not to push the larceny part o' the charges against me, though they would against Mabel. Then I tried to speak again, but you says you'd heard enough; you understood the case. You sent Mabel to the workhouse for six months, and the number six seemed to be kind of a favourite with you just then, because you told me I better leave Vreedersburgh inside o' six hours. I tried to say something. I tried to——"

"Yes, I remember," said the mayor. "I'm sorry I didn't let you speak."

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"I guess nobody speaks when you don't 'let' 'em!" said Milly Cross. "When you said you'd heard enough, the big cop give me a twist of the wrist that fixed my tryin' to say anything! It give me something else to think about for quite a few minutes!"

And with this recollection, the muscles about her mouth underwent a spasmodic change, but there was no sign of tears in her eyes. Throughout her story she had spoken with sharpness, and at times with fire; but not once with pathos; not once with a quaver of self-pity.

The man who had banished her was obviously somewhat disturbed. "I'm sorry I didn't let you speak," he said again. "We have so many that we'd never get through if we let all of them talk as much as they want to. I'll see that the charges against you are erased."

Then Milly's loud laughter rang out once more. "A lot of good that'll do *me!*" she cried. "The fella I left Boonville on account of, he was in the drunks waitin' behind I and Mabel when we were called up. He'd come up to Vreedersburgh on a bat, and got run in. And the girl he quit me for, she'd come up from Boonville to get him out. She was sittin' right there in your court-room, and him

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and her both liked to fell over when they heard my name and looked—and saw me! Then the girl she begun to laugh and wink at Charlie, and he kind of laughed, too; and I guess it *was* funny, lookin' back at the way I used to tell him he'd end up if he kep' on bein' a bartender, and the things I used to say about that girl. They heard what I was charged with, and they saw me stand there and get convicted with Mabel Dessing, and they heard what you said to me. That about fixes me plenty with *Boonville*, I guess!"

"No, it doesn't," said Harley impulsively. "I'll give you a letter stating that the charge against you was a mistake and that it has been erased."

Milly looked at him queerly; then she shook her head, marvelling. "You don't know enough to rub a wet boy," she said; "but I should think you *would* know enough to understand that when everybody in a little town gets all excited, goin' around gabbin' the news how somebody's turned out to be a scandal, nobody can get up much interest in a letter sayin' that the excitement's all been a mistake."

For a moment Harley was nonplussed. "Well ——" he began lamely, and paused.

"No," she said. "That's the finish o' Milly

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Cross with all the uncles and aunts and cousins in Boonville. After that girl gets through with her story down there, you could give me a hundred letters and they'd think I probably forged 'em. She'll have yesterday's paper from Vreedersburgh, too; you bet your sweet life! It told about I and Mabel, and what we got arrested for. If I went back there I'd have to spend the rest o' my life stoppin' people on the Square, and gettin' 'em to read your letter about it all bein' a mistake. But I wasn't thinkin' o' goin' back there. I'm going on out into the country."

"What you goin' to do?" little Ben asked quickly.

"I'll find something," she answered. "I'm strong as a steer, and I can do farm cookin', or anything else they'd be a mind to put me at, I guess. I'll find *some* place that'll take me in; and if they once take me in I'll bet it won't be long before they find they can't afford to let me go! *I'm* not worried!"

"Let me go with you," the boy cried, jumping up eagerly. "I *got* to be a farm boy! We'll say we're brother an' sister, an' we'll work all day, an' in the evenings I'll fiddle in the kitchen. Will you, Milly?"

She looked at him thoughtfully and then smiled.

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"Why, yes, I guess so," she said. "I don't see why not."

But the mayor of Vreedersburgh interposed. "Nonsense!" he exclaimed. "You'll have a harder time finding work in the country than you did in town. This boy wouldn't be the worse for a few months in the reform school; they're very conscientious people in charge there; and as for you, Miss Cross, I've been very glad of the chance to hear what you had to say, and I tell you freely I rescind my order to you. You can come back to Vreedersburgh at once."

"I *can*?" she asked, and once more she stared at him incredulously.

"Certainly," he answered, inclining his head. "You can come back and live there as long as you choose."

Then she shocked him. "Not in a thousand years!" she cried. "I wouldn't go back to that place if you give it to me with every last cent there is in its banks. It ain't only the way I was treated there that makes me feel like this; and it ain't just the things I saw happening; nor the way I feel about girls like Mabel, and about her bein' out in the workhouse with her T. B., nor it ain't the way your

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police and your prosecutor act; nor all the other things like that; it's none o' them things so much. It's something funny and kind o' queer in *me*, I guess! All the time I been livin' in Vreedersburgh, ever since I first come from Boonville, I been feelin' like something was kind o' *poisonin'* me! Yes, sir; that's just it—like I was gettin' poisoned slow, but every day a little more. All the time, week in and week out, month after month, it kep' gettin' worse and worse, and I couldn't tell what it *was*. Seemed to me sometimes like I must be kind o' crazy! Well, sir, that night I spent in your jail—all at once it come to me: all bright and clear I saw in my mind what this poisoned feelin' was. It was because in all that time I'd been livin' in Vreedersburgh I'd never had *one pretty thing to look at*, and never once been *clean!*"

"What!" cried the astounded and indignant mayor. "What do you mean?"

"Why, you know it yourself, Mr. Otis," said Milly, "if you stop to think. Just the *minute* a person's washed in that town he's dirty again! That was what had been poisonin' me—never seein' a *thing* that wasn't ugly and *never* bein' clean! If a person could be clean for a little while maybe they

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could stand it, and if they could see something pretty maybe they could; but there *ain't* anything pretty in Vreedersburgh, and if there was it'd be dirty, and then it couldn't be pretty. And so when you said for me to get out of Vreedersburgh in six hours and never come back, why, Mr. Otis, in all my misery, when I got outside your court-room I felt a kind o' something *happy* inside o' me, like I wanted to sing! You treated me like *I* wouldn't treat a dog, but if it hadn't been for you I mightn't of had any more sense than to hang around that town because I didn't know what else to do; and I want to tell you, Mr. Otis, I haven't got a bit of hard feelings toward you. Indeed, I haven't! Why, instead o' that, when you told me I had to leave Vreedersburgh forever," cried Milly, "the way I felt to you was *thankful!*"

And then, stretching out her capable hand to the boy: "You and I don't ever have to go back to Vreedersburgh!" she said; and there were tears in her eyes at last, but they were dancing tears, tears of joy. "Come on, Benny Pritchard!" she cried.

He seized her hand, and they ran lightly across the pasture, toward the road.

Harley Otis repressed an impulse to pursue them.

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He felt that insult had been offered to his town and to himself, and that something ought to be done about it; but he could not think just what to do. Finally, as he rested an arm on the neck of his mare, debating the matter rather sorely, he considered the source of the insult—a cannery girl just out of police court, and abetted by a runaway guttersnipe—and he cheered up.

By the time he had mounted and ridden slowly to the pasture gate, the two renegades had reached the road by a short cut, and were trudging manfully eastward, their backs toward Harley and his town. He looked after them thoughtfully as they went steadily onward; the girl's figure stalwart and competent; the boy's confidently dependent.

They looked back never once, but, just before they passed round a bend in the road Harley saw that the boy had taken his fiddle out of the green cloth, and had begun to play, and that the girl was waving her arms peculiarly. Both Milly and Ben were also doing something peculiar with their feet.

They were dancing!

The sky was blue over them, and they passed round the bend in the road, dancing to the boy's fiddle. Sunshine was upon them: they danced every step

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the more gaily. Dancing, they passed out of sight.

. . . Harley stared a moment longer; then he spoke to his mare and turned her head toward where a great dinginess overspread the lower heavens. The mare broke into a canter, and within five minutes her master had drawn rein upon a little eminence, pride and happiness tingling upon his very skin. Gone utterly from his mind were the renegades; forgotten was everything but what lay before him. For there, a swarming, steaming, vast black blotch of buildings—great buildings and squalid buildings, jagged and craggy, or squat and sprawling, but all dim, fuming in the smoke—there before him in the middle distance, there lay Vreedersburgh, his city!

He had forgotten Milly Cross, and was not reminded of her even when his eye dwelt on the vague oblong profiles of the great Baker canneries, at the north end of the town; but they did remind him of something: that the dividends on his stock in the canneries had paid him 12 per cent. in the past year. And, as he remembered that, his joy and pride increased. From one end of the great town to the other his eye dwelt upon chimneys that meant divi-

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dends. There, as in a coal-mine, men lived and created dividends all their lives: Vreedersburgh was the very home and sanctuary of money-making. It was beautiful!

And then—oh, then! all alone on the little hillcrest as he was, save for his startled mare, Harley Otis lifted his voice and shouted aloud. In that moment of rapture he had found his inspiration. Like a flash from the heavens he saw the words in letters of fire before him; and the glory of it would ever be his—he had found the second name for Vreedersburgh!

He had found it!

Aloud, he repeated to himself, marvelling, and yet with humility, those words which all Vreedersburgh was to receive with unanimous enthusiasm before that night should fall; those words destined to ring from one end of the country to the other; destined to be printed or engraved on all the official writing-paper of the city from that day onward; destined to be the perpetual newspaper rubric of Vreedersburgh; destined to be solemnly coupled with Vreedersburgh in the mouth of every orator who ever spoke the name thenceforth for evermore; and, finally, destined to be carved—to be carved sincerely, in the

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highest good faith, with loftiest enthusiasm, and with no faintest farthest shadow of mockery—to be carved imperishably, in majestic letters of stone, over the great doorways of Vreedersburgh's new million-dollar City Hall:

VREEDERSBURGH—THE CITY BEAUTIFUL

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BRUDIE'S PICKLE

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BRUDIE'S PICKLE

"I'M A Forty-Eighter!" said the oldest Mr. Albert Alberger on the morning of his ninetieth birthday.

"I'm a Forty-Eighter, and don't you fergit it, Brudie! Don't you once ever fergit it for one second ever once at all!"

He spoke with vigour, addressing his grandson, the youngest Mr. Albert Alberger. "I got good enough eyesight yet," the old man went on, tapping with his cane upon the little oblong of cardboard which had dropped from his grandson's pocket to the floor. "I got good enough eyesight to see it's a caller's card. So much airs you got to go pudding on!"

"That isn't 'airs.'" Albert protested. "Everybody has their cards."

"Business cards, yes. Caller's cards, no! I got good eyesight—anyway, I got good enough through my spegtickles to see if it ain't a caller's card. Hand it to me, you Brudie."

The youngest Alberger picked up the card and placed it upon the extended palm of his grandfather,

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whereupon the latter shuffled to the strong light of the open window.

"Caller's card! Didn't I knew it?" he cried. "You got a new name?" he demanded, after a second scrutiny of the card. "You got a double name?"

"It's nothing at all," said the young man. "I don't see what you're so cross about."

"Look!" the grandfather exclaimed. "You read dot card! Speak it out loud, I ask you!"

The grandson, irked but obedient, read aloud what was engraved upon the card:

"'Mr. Albert Alberger, Second.'"

"I hear it!" his grandfather cried fiercely. "What you put on behind you?"

"What?"

"What you put on behind you?"

"You mean 'Second,' gran'pa?"

"What means it—'Second'?"

"Why, that's nothing," said Albert. "It's only so's people can tell you and papa and me apart."

"So!" the old man shouted. "You expect nobody can tell me and your papa from you unless you got a 'Mister' in front of you and a 'Second' stuck on behind you, sittin' on a caller's card? You want

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to be a aristocracy, I guess so! What you expect I come to America for? To git granchilten born to grow up makin' monkey-shines? No, sir, you're wrong, I'll show you! I marched wit' a *gun* against monkey-shines! I tell you I'm a Forty-Eighter!"

"Well, what you expect me to do?" young Albert inquired plaintively. "I got to have a name of my own, don't I? You're Albert Alberger, aren't you?"

"You bet!"

"And papa's Albert Alberger, Junior?"

"All right."

"Well, I got a right to something, haven't I? I don't know for sure, but I think it's the *law* I got to be Albert Alberger, Second."

"Listen!" said his grandfather. "It's plendy fer you peoble can say, 'He's dot young Alberger fella from "Albergers' Imported Wines, Bowling and Beer-Garden."' Ain't it plendy enough you're from Albergers'?"

"No, it certainly is not!" the young man replied with emphasis.

"'Chunior,' dot's all right," the ancient man continued. "'Second,' dot's aristocracy!"

In the grandson's opinion, this ruling was consistent with the unreasonable character of Mr. Albert

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Alberger, First; and young Albert had learned that, no matter how impulsively the old man spoke, he never afterward confessed a change of view; therefore the only way to deal with him was to reach a deadlock as soon as possible, and allow matters to remain in that state. Accordingly, young Albert said:

"Well, anyhow, I'm going to keep the 'Second' on my name; and I'm going to keep the calling-cards, too."

"What you do?" the grandfather cried angrily. "You go pay calls on some silly female monkeys on Maple Street? What else you got 'em for, I bet you! You want to go cut some shines on Maple Street!"

Albert's face had become pink, and his hand shook a little as he extended it in a warning gesture. "Now, you look out!" he cried, with sudden huskiness. "You be careful how you talk! I'm not going to stand everything around here! I got a right to go calling on Maple Street if I want to."

Upon this the countenance of the nonagenarian gave a demonstration of its plasticity. Already remarkable as a bit of eccentric modelling, it ran through a series of such radical alterations in contour

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that the oldest Alberger seemed to be giving impersonations of a whole gallery of elderly men, none of them much resembling himself, except in the matter of age. Subsequently he chewed with incredible rapidity upon nothing, the process shortening his face appallingly. Then, all at once, he became placid.

"So you want to git mat, iss it?" he said; and sat down in the chair by the open window. "How olt are you, Brudie?"

"I'm twenty years old."

"So? It's a shame!"

"Why is it 'a shame'?"

"Because twendy years olt you ought to know anyhow a little!" replied the exasperating antique.

Certainly his grandson found him exasperating. "*What* don't I know?" he demanded hotly. "Just you tell me anything I don't know!"

That touched a coil of mirth within the breast of Albert the First. He cackled and called upon his God. "'Chust tell me anyt'ing I don't know'!" he echoed in falsetto. "Dot's a putty smart fella, I tell you! One day I ask dot fella if he reads Heine's poems yet, and he t'inks I'm talkin' about dose adwertisement rhymes Heinie Glotz puts in noospapers about his carpet-store!" He laughed again,

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then abruptly leaned forward and shook his cane at young Albert. "You noodle!" he cried. "All you know iss to spent money on caller's cards and stick some crazy yella chammy gluffs on your hants, and try to be a smart Alecks aristocracy! I know where you go! Me and your papa was out riting in dot surrey-wagon, and didn't we saw you? Aha! we seen you sittin' against a hammick in olt Wilkinses yard—dot olt cheater of a G. B. Wilkins, what I wouldn't wiped my shoe on when he was alife, because I got too much rispect for my shoe—we see you, and we see who sits in dot hammick! All on top she's got yella hair and a hat cost forty dollars, and no sense in her head; only monkey-shines smart Alecks aristocracy and——"

"That'll be enough!" young Albert shouted. "That'll be enough from you!"

"No, it won't! I——"

But the youth's blood was up; it was up so high that his face showed blotches of a colour almost carmine against its general flush of pink. "I'll just show you it's enough!" he cried. "You don't get to talk any more like that to me!"

And to make this declaration entirely convincing, he ran out to the street.

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The room where he had left his grandfather was the "sitting room" of the three surviving Albergers. They dwelt in the rear of the brick building, the forepart of which was the somewhat Gothic hall, containing the bar, the bowling-alleys, the wine-tables, and the cigar-cases. The window in the "sitting room" looked forth upon the neat beer-garden; and at this moment Albert Alberger, Junior, worked therein with trowel and rake; from time to time giving over his own labour to direct that of an amateur painter, professionally a waiter, who was painting some tubs for plants a pleasant green. The oldest Alberger, again chewing frenziedly upon nothing, turned his head to blink at these May-time preparations for the coming outdoor season.

"You heert dot fella?" he inquired of Albert, Junior, whose cylindrical, good-natured head—lifted, after the transplanting of a vine—was now upon a level with the window-sill. "You heert how dot fella hollers and goes on?"

Albert, Junior, laughed. "You got to have anyway *some* excitement on your birthday, don't you, papa!" he said. "If you don't get it no other way, you got to start a scrap with Brudie."

"He's a noodle!" the ancient asserted with con-

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viction. "Better for us it been his brudder Herman what got well, when dot scarlet-feefer was. You know where dot smart Alecks goes to-day, all dressed up in his yella chammy gluffs wit' a speggle-spotted silk necktie? Wilkinses! Wilkinses on Maple Street; dot's where he goes!"

"Oh, well, papa," said Albert, Junior, "that needn't mean nothing so much. I wouldn't care if he went there a couple times with some of the other young fellas his age—maybe to a party, or something like that—so long he didn't go reg'lar. Once or twice, that's no harm."

"Once or twice! What about once or twice a day?"

"Well, I wouldn't like it," the son admitted. "Maybe p'raps I'll talk to him about it, one these days."

"I guess so! What about how he sit by dot hammick we saw him?"

"I'll have a talk with him, papa."

"Wilkinses!" the old man cried. "I tell you I wouldn't wipe my shoe on Wilkinses! You want to know, I'll tell you, I got no use for dot whole Maple Street fit-out! Kit-gluff show-off peoble!"

"Well, I don't know about that," the younger

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Alberger said. "There's some pretty good citizens livin' there. Henry Glotz is buildin' a house on Maple Street right now. He goes with them people a good deal."

Albert the First was but the more embittered. "Dot's fine!" he returned. "Glotz, he's gittin' monkey-shines in his noodle, too, is he? You want to know what Maple Street iss?"

"Oh, I guess I know, papa."

"No, you don't!" the old man said sharply. "You ain't seen it like I haf. You ain't no Forty-Eighter and you ain't no Sixty-Two-er, neither! Listen, Albert, I tell you! I tell you what Maple Street iss."

Albert, Junior, rested his arm upon the window-sill. "Well, go on, papa," he said, humouring the elder's mood. "*I* got time."

"Maple Street, dot's Wilkinses!" Albert the First declared emphatically. "And Wilkinses iss aristocracy smart Alecks monkey-shines. What you expect I help make so much trouble for, in Chermany in Forty-Eight? Well, I'll tell you, Albert: dot was for freedom. Well, we couldn't git no freedom in Chermany. Instead o' freedom I tell you I hat to light out, quick! So, I come to America—to here

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where I got already a cousin—and I go to work for him in his beer-saloon. He got a little place; right here where I'm sittin', it was. I sticked here when he died, and year by year I builted up dot fine splendit bissness we got here now. Didn't I?"

"Of course you did, papa."

"Well, how big a popalation was our town when I come here because I can't get no freedom in Chermany? She was fourteen hundut peoble. Yes, sir, chust fourteen hundut. Fine peoble, too; no monkey-shines and noodles, Albert. All peoble what did plendy work; all peoble dot says 'How-dy'-do, good-morning; how's your family?' Nobody tries to be smart Alecks; nobody gits stuck up—everybody goes along good, and everybody iss neighbours. Fine peoble, Albert! Well, sir, she begins to grow; she svells oud. Fifteen hundut? No—! She comes *fifty* hundut; all time svellin' oud pigger; —and here comes Wilkinses!

"Dot olt one, G. B. Wilkins, he's a cheater and a windbag; he's a great kit-gluff fella, and makes speeches. A year after he come here he schwindelt seven, eight hundut dollars from some farmers on a real-estate, and putty soon he git in Conguss. Next, he comes back and sits up some more real-estating,

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him and his son, and builted 'em a show-off house on Maple Street. Den dey git some noodles to built some more show-off houses on Maple Street, and rite up and down in carridges, and cut monkey-shines. Well, we got someding else on our hants, dose times, because Abe'aham Lincoln he says America *ain't* got freedom yet. Dot's when you was a baby, Albert, and by Chemminy! I didn't want to go—but I wanted to lif in a country dot hat all freedom, so I went. In sixty-two I went. Yes, sir, I went amarching wi't der boys, and helped let hell into Chonny Rebs.

"Well, when I come home, our town she's still a-svellin' oud. Bei Gott, I seen her svell oud from fourteen hundut to sixty-one t'ousand, where she iss now—and all dot time Maple Street gits worse and worse. Wilkinses got some more show-off peoble to built show-off houses on Maple Street. More and more dey got 'em. Soon as a show-off family comes to lif in our town, dey got to go and lif on Maple Street! Dose peoble iss *all* kit-gluff noodles! Olt G. B. Wilkins, he's dead long time; so's his son; but plendy Wilkinses left on Maple Street, and Wilkinses iss head of all dem kit-gluff noodles. Dot yella-hair, ain't she a Wilkinses? Hah! I bet you! You

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want Brudie turning into a noodle? Fine he'll be arount *Albergers'!*

"Look at dot fine glass o' peoble iss Albergers' customers; fine family trade; peoble wit' good sense and good senses' manners. How long you t'ink dose peoble goin' to haf any respects fer Albergers' if Albergers' cuts up shines wit' yella gluffs and goes chasin' after Maple Streeters? You raised Brudie good, Albert; but I tell you, you let him turn into a Maple Street noodle and he ain't fit to be in Albergers'. No, sir! If he's a Maple Streeter he ain't fit to be a'Merican citizen!"

The expression of Albert, Junior, had become serious during this discourse. "You're right," he said. "Brudie's got to cut it out. "I'll talk to him."

"How long you goin' to wait?" the ancient demanded. "Besites his yella chammy gloves he hat to-day a yella walkin' cane!"

The brow of Albert, Junior, darkened indeed. "I'll get after him right off," he said. "You bet I'll settle with him before things goes too far!"

He might have felt that things had already gone rather far with young Albert if the latter could have been disclosed to his view at that moment. Young Albert, in fact, had just emerged from the doorway

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of a corner drugstore at the upper end of Maple Street, and had seized the kid-gloved hand of a passing Wilkins. The manner of Albert was violent; that of Miss Wilkins showed surprise neither at his vehemence nor at the encounter. It was a rendezvous.

She was about Albert's age; not more than a year younger; a fragile, expensive little creature, almost touchingly sweet to look at, and, like spun sugar, not to be handled at all. How well she herself understood this was made plain by the haste of her effort to withdraw her fingers from the bulky enclosure of Albert's chamois glove. However, she had no strength, and could only lift her shoulder and jerk her arm in protest.

"Let go, Albert," she said pettishly, in a charming voice. "Let *go!*"

"All right," he laughed, obeying. "I wasn't trying to hold your hand—not on the street."

"Not anywhere!" she exclaimed, his implication finding little favour with her.

Albert's ample face was tactless enough to exhibit a great deal of mystification. "What's the matter?" he inquired, as they walked slowly on together. "You didn't mind it last Tuesday night

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when we were sitting out on your porch in the moonli——"

"Hush!" she said crisply. "You mustn't talk like that."

"Why not, when it's the tru——"

"Hush!" she insisted. "Saying things like that isn't *nice!* I don't like it."

"I don't see what *I've* done to make you treat me so different, to-day, all at once," said Albert, beginning to be offended. "What's the matter, Anita?"

"Nothing at all."

"Well, then, why do you go and get cross when I happen to mention——"

Anita Wilkins uttered a sharp sound of impatience. "If you say any more, Albert," she cried, "I'll turn around, right here on the street, and not walk another step with you!"

After an inner conflict, Albert contained himself in silence.

This was his first sight of Anita since a walk they had taken on the morning after the sentimental Tuesday evening he had thought proper to recall to her mind, and during that previous stroll Anita's mood had been complaisant, even fond. In fact,

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when they reached the outskirts of the town her small hand had been so friendly as to place itself voluntarily within his own, for a moment or two, without explanation.

Since then, throughout a week which seemed everlasting, he had been looking forward to a repetition of this pleasant event; looking forward also to other repetitions. He thought she would probably be more celestially definite, this time, about how often she thought of him. She had admitted, on their Wednesday walk, that it was "so often, she wondered how much it meant," and a further admission, just as they parted, sent him home by way of the rushing heavens: "Oftener than about anybody else in the world, Albert!"

Now here was a change with a vengeance! She not only jerked her hand away from him, but scolded him; even threatened "to turn around, right here on the street," and make him an ignominious figure to the eyes of any beholder. Albert's breast heaved; the muscles of his large face moved threateningly, and his eyes blinked. These symptoms, ten years earlier, would have indicated to those who knew him that he was about to weep with loud vocal demonstrations; but he never went quite that far now, of

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course. He was puzzled; more hurt than puzzled; angrier than hurt; and he stalked beside Miss Wilkins in sore dignity, inadequate phrases forming in his mind.

His impulse was to tell her, with all possible bitterness of enunciation, that he wasn't used to being treated like a dog by anybody, and that he didn't propose to get used to it, either! He might have followed the impulse had there not fallen a gentle touch upon his arm; three white-kid fingers rested for a caressing instant upon his sleeve; an appealing whisper fell ineffably upon his ear:

"Don't be cross wif' me, boy?"

And he looked down upon a small, glowing face which almost touched his shoulder and smiled wistfully, asking forgiveness.

"You cross wif' 'Nita, boy?"

He was not. Instantly he was not. This small Anita was the perfect mistress of little enchantments; she was always ready with cunning to compass her desires, and just now her desire was to soothe this bulky lover; for she was tender-hearted, and could never bear to see any animal rage or suffer—not even a big boy. When she did not behold the suffering, it did not matter so much; but Albert's was poignantly

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visible. For reasons decidedly her own, she had planned to discourage him thoroughly to-day; but her too gentle heart betrayed her, and she was unable to aggrieve him further while he was yet in her sight and she must be a witness of his distress. So she decided to find another way: Albert was too vivid.

"You're *not* cross, Albert, boy?"

"I was just pretending," he said. "I just thought I'd let you think I was cross."

And he made bold to clasp for an instant the fingers that had touched his sleeve; the which she suffered him, and smiled. "Did you wait long at the drugstore for me?" she asked. "I think it's better, our meeting somewhere like this, than your coming to the house very often; don't you, Albert?"

"Yes, I guess it is," he said; and for a little while they walked without speaking, inwardly preoccupied. What went on in their two minds just then was odd enough; for Anita was remembering how careful she had been that her family did not become too inquisitive about Albert and discover his origin; and Albert was thinking that he would have to bring about no inconsiderable alterations in Anita before she would become acceptable to his father and grandfather.

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He had not a suspicion that her relatives might have some prejudices against himself, which is further witness to the delicacy of Anita and to that tender heart of hers. It was actually Albert's impression that she had divined the attitude of his own family toward Maple Street noodles.

"She knows when I get home they might ask me where I been," he thought. "Then, if I been to her house, I either have to lie or get in trouble; but if I met her outside and don't have to say I been to her house, then I'll be all right." This was a high compliment to Anita, one of the kind that lovers pay: it invested her with the powers of a seeress, since he had never mentioned the Alberger viewpoint to her. "It's better, meeting like this," he thought. "I can go to her house enough after I teach her to be more the kind of woman *they'd* like. Then they'll think she's fine."

The vision in his mind was of an Anita made over in a fashion suitable to Albergers': an Anita weighing about sixty muscular pounds more than the lady now walking beside him—a saving, industrious Anita, hearty with the customers, anxious to please the family trade, and a capable hand with Swiss-cheese sandwiches, roll'm-ups, and all the wursts. That

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was the picture which, rather hazily, in his mind's eye, he formed of the intricate little person, Anita Wilkins.

The unfortunate Albert was capable of this vision, even while he beheld before him what she did to her father's four-thousand-dollar income: the New York hat that looked as if some burlesquing boy had made it for a joke on his sister; the misshapen blouse, trimmed with mink; the futurist skirt; the trifling gaiters; the foolishly pretty shoes, twinkling with highlights. The vision of an Alberger Anita was in his mind's eye even when the end of her mink tippet blew into his physical eye; even when she lifted her hand to adjust the tippet, and he saw the crusted miracle of a watch she wore on her white-kid wrist. Albert's visions were somewhat exorbitant; there was poesy in him, evidently.

"I cut something out o' the paper Sunday to show you," he said presently. "I didn't know whether you'd seen it." He handed her the clipping:

"Owing to a business opportunity, Mr. Henry Wilkins, Fifth, has returned from college and will reside with his parents in this city."

"Oh, yes, I saw it," said Anita, tossing the clipping away. "Of course I knew Cousin Henry was home."

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"Pretty good joke, isn't it?" said Albert.

"I don't see why."

"Oh, it's all over town he got fired because he couldn't keep up in his studies. That's why there was a 'business opportunity' for Mr. Henry Wilkins, Fifth!"

Anita frowned. "You're entirely mistaken," she said. "Henry's father insisted on his going into business." And as Albert shouted jeeringly, she added, "If you laugh when I tell you things, I'll think you're rather rude."

"Well, I can get along without laughing for a minute; it's nothing to me," he said. "Anyway, we got Henry Wilkins, Fifth, to thank for introducing us to each other. Just a little over four months ago, the night after Christmas; that's when it was."

"Yes, Albert."

"I wasn't thinking much about going to that Charity Ball," he said, plunging, as lovers will, into reminiscences of "how it happened." "And then I says to myself, 'Believe I'll go see if there's any good-lookers there.' So when I got there, I saw *you*. I had to hunt around to find somebody that knew you, so finally I ran across Henry. I traded him a

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bicycle once, when we were in high school. So he introduced you to me."

"No, he introduced you to me, Albert."

"Yes," said Albert. "That was a pretty important night for you and me, Anita; but I guess he never knew *that*, when he was introducing us! I got something else I want to show you." And he offered for her inspection a card, twin to that which had caused so much emotion within his grandfather.

"'Albert Alberger, Second,'" she read. "But, Albert, it's printed."

"You bet!"

"You ought to've had it engraved."

"What's the difference?" he asked.

"Oh, nobody has cards *printed!*" she informed him. "That isn't a bit nice."

Albert had thought to please her, and he was piqued. He was additionally annoyed when, before he could pursue the subject, the lady he escorted was hailed from the rear, and an exquisite youth appeared, panting.

"I've just been to your house, 'Nita," said Henry Wilkins, Fifth, adjusting his step to his cousin's, but not to Albert's. "Aunt Marjie told me you'd gone walking, and I've been running all over this end of

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town to find you. Why don't you leave word at the house which way you're going when you know I'm in town?"

Anita looked startled; and a slight agitation became audible in her voice, though all she said was, "Why, Henry *Wilkins!*"

"Well, why don't you?" Henry insisted.

Albert frowned heavily; he was naturally disturbed by the intrusion, and he was annoyed by the high-handed, ignoring way in which it was made. It seemed to him a violation of actual rights which people ought to have sense enough to recognize; and he cast about in his mind for some means to demonstrate that Anita was no longer public property, and that, even for cousins, she did not "leave word," at home, where she was going—not when she was going to walk with Albert Alberger, Second!

Henry paid no attention whatever to him, but continued, to Anita: "You knew I was in town three days ago. Why haven't you called me up? It was your place to do something first, don't you think, after the way you haven't answered my letters lately?"

This had a happy effect upon Albert. His irritation vanished at once; he was delighted, and a merry

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mood took him. Henry's complaint proved clearly that Anita had something better to think of than answering letters from Maple Street noodles. For, when he looked at Henry Wilkins, Fifth, Albert suddenly agreed with his grandfather, at least about the male population of the pretentious thoroughfare. Henry was a slim youth, as beautiful and cold as the moon. He was fair, with hair of a silver blond; and his expression was infantile in its rapt unconsciousness of all the universe save Henry and what affected him.

"Where you going?" he said. "Let's go back to the house. I want to talk to you."

"Hello, Swink!" said Albert gaily.

"Hellow, Deitsh!" Henry carelessly returned. "Anita, let's go back to——"

"What in the world are those names you're calling each other?" Anita cried; and she managed to add a nervous but placative laugh to the interruption.

"We called him 'Deitsh' at high school," said Henry. "Didn't you hear what I said? How much farther are you——"

"'Swink's' always been his nickname," Albert explained. "I hear you just got fired from college, Swink." And he laughed boisterously, appealing

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confidently to Anita. "Didn't I tell you it was all over town he got fired because he was so dumb he couldn't keep up?"

Henry was able to ignore this jocular attack, though it rather strained his capacity for ignoring things, especially as Albert had but stated the lamentable fact. Anita, on the contrary, flushed deeper, and suddenly wheeled about, facing homeward.

"All right," she said. "Let's *do* go back!"

"Where can I get a chance to have a talk with you alone?" Henry added, turning with her.

Albert turned also; but he was not quick, and he found himself a step behind them—a step which he took with vigour, placing himself between the cousins, instead of going to Anita's unescorted left. "Well," he said, "I guess I just as soon go back, too. We can't get much more good out o' this walk now."

The cold young Henry seemed not so cold at this. It was with an easily visible amount of heat, in fact, that, after saving himself from a fall (Albert's shoulder having brushed him heavily), he passed to Anita's left. All three faces were flushed: Henry's with indignation; Anita's with anxiety; Albert's with triumph.

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"I guess it's all right so far as I'm concerned," Albert said, "if you want to go back to the house. One way or another—go walking or sit in the house and chatter—it hardly makes any difference to *us*, does it, Anita?"

She gave him a dark glance; then she gave her cousin an appealing one. "Oh, it might," she said. "I don't know. I guess so. Yes, it would." For the moment she was disconcerted, and with reason. She had not looked for this encounter. "Cousin Henry," she said, making a pathetic effort, "did you find everybody all well at your house when you got home?"

Henry was not inclined to ease matters; he stalked beside her, furious. "Never mind," he said. "I'll talk to you when we get alone."

Albert laughed a laugh of contempt, not ill-natured, merely triumphant. "Come around some other day then," he said. "Up to then, fall in behind! You're too late to get on the band-wagon!"

Anita shuddered.

Henry breathed rapidly, almost audibly, but attempted no retort; and Albert was in high fettle. He laughed loudly again, and, reaching behind Anita, slapped Henry upon the back.

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"You're too late for the band-wagon!" he cried. "Fall in with the kids behind, old Swinkie!"

"You keep your hands off me!" Mr. Wilkins commanded dangerously.

"You get mad and I'll turn you upside down and spank you!" shouted the uproarious Albert. "If anybody gets mad it ought to be me. Shouldn't it, Anita?"

Scarlet, she made no reply, but hurried the faster toward home, while Albert gaily pressed the question:

"Shouldn't it be me if anybody has to get mad? Here he thinks he ought to get mad while *he's* the one comes spoiling a walk I'm taking with my girl!"

"*Albert!*" she gasped miserably.

"Well, I'm not mad," he laughed; and he stretched forth his hand, offering Henry another good-natured slap; but Henry evaded the gift, muttering savagely. The yellow chamois glove paused in air, then with a second thought rested upon Anita's shoulder. "*We* aren't mad at him, are we, Anita?"

As Anita jerked her shoulder free of that possessive hand, her expression indicated that she considered the moment a tragic one. The two words she spoke, however, lacked every dramatic quality, though the tone was sufficiently emotional.

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"Oh, *my!*" she said.

They had reached her gateway. "Come in, Henry," she said, breathlessly. "Albert, I'll write you a note and——"

"Oh, I just as soon come in," he said. "It don't matter so much, once in a while."

She opened her lips to speak, but proved to be incapable. With a blanched face she turned, and followed by the two young men, scampered unhappily to the front door of the house, opened it, and passed within.

The three stood in a broad, old-fashioned hall—a hall with a white-and-black tiled floor, black walnut newel and staircase, dismaying draperies, antlers with hats on them; all haunted by a faint smell of apples.

Anita spoke in haste, and her voice was a tremulous ghost of itself. "Albert," she said, "will you please go in the reception-room?"

"I don't care," he responded. "Go and talk with him a while, if Swinkie's got some family stuff he wants to tell you. It's nothing to me, so long as he knows he's too late for the band-wagon. Don't take too much time, though: we don't want *all* our afternoon spoiled for us."

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And he passed cheerfully through the doorway whither her impatient hand urged him. Henry had already gone into the library on the other side of the hall, and the stricken lady proceeded to follow Henry. Tears twinkled upon her lashes the instant she had closed the door, and she seemed inclined to shed them upon her cousin's shoulder; but he stepped back with convincing haste, avoiding her.

"What did that Dutchman mean?" he demanded. "Nice thing for a man to come back to, isn't it? Find the girl he's engaged to——"

"But we aren't engaged," she protested, moaning softly as she acquiesced in his rejection of a shoulder whereon to weep. "We aren't engaged, Henry."

"Aren't we?"

"No, dear; you know we aren't. We're not exactly engaged," she added, weeping more. "I've never been exactly engaged to anybody in my life."

"Well, that Dutchman thinks you're engaged to *him*, doesn't he?"

"No!" she wailed, sinking into a chair. "Of course he doesn't. He *never* acted such a crazy way before! I don't know what was the matter with him!"

"I do," said Henry. "Nothing could be *much* plainer!"

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"What?"

"He thinks you're going to marry him."

The unhappy girl stifled a scream. "No, no, *no!*" she cried. "How could he?"

"Because you've been flirting with him."

"No, no, *no*, Henry!" she protested, huskily. "I haven't ever done anything *like* flirt with him. Sometimes I *have* flirted; I admit that. I did last summer, and told you all about it. Don't you remember?" In the excess of her candour she lifted her wet eyes to his. "But never since this Christmas, when I found out *you* cared. *Never*, Henry!"

"Then what's he mean, calling you his 'girl'?"

"I don't *know*, Henry. It's just his German way, I think. I've hardly seen anything of him at all: he's only been here to call three or four times. I've always been almost *icy* with him. For a while—and you were so far away, Henry—I did think he was rather nice, and sort of big and good-looking and——"

Henry interrupted her violently. "*Aha!*" he cried. "I see!"

"Henry!" she wailed. "I only mean good-looking in his *way*—not a way that appeals to me at all! You've just got to believe me, Henry. Henry,

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you *do* believe me?" And she seized his hand, clinging to it and leaving tears upon it.

Henry began to be shaken. "You can't fool me," he said. "I know you've been cooin' around that Dutchman; but there's one way you could make me think it didn't amount to much."

"Tell me."

"Go in there and make him understand you never want to see him around the place again."

She dropped his hand and uttered a subdued shriek. "Oh, I couldn't! I couldn't, Henry! It would hurt his feelings awfully, and you know perfectly well I *can't* see people suffer. I *can't*, Henry."

Henry intelligently made for the door.

"Stop!" she cried, running to place herself in his way. "You shan't go, Henry! You *mustn't* be so mean to me!"

"Then do what I say."

She saw that he meant it inexorably; she gulped, shivered, sighed brokenly, and bowed her head in resignation. "You wouldn't mind, Henry," she said feebly, "if I had mamma do it for me?"

"No," said Henry. "I think that would be better. It'd do him lots o' good."

"I won't be long," whispered Anita, and the

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tender prophecy of a smile might have been seen through the mist of her tears as she tiptoed out of the door.

In the room where Albert waited he discovered the origin of the faint odour noticeable in the hall—a silver bowl of big, polished red apples on a centre-table. He looked upon these with a pleasant interest, and, seating himself at ease, ate two. He was just finishing the second when a lady of fifty entered the room so quietly that she startled him, and he sat open mouthed, staring, the remnants of the apple in his hand.

She was so gentlewomanly she might have dressed herself in the character of "gentlewoman" for a fancy-dress party. Her delicate head—a religious, elderly replica of Anita's—completed a simple harmony otherwise composed of gray silk, ivory lace, and a cameo. Her voice was almost as quiet and quick as the noiseless step of her invisible feet.

"You are Mr. Alberger," she said, but did not await his confirmation of the statement. "Anita introduced you to me on the porch one evening, but it was dark. I am her mother. I'm very sorry to have something to say which may be a little awkward for both you and myself, Mr. Alberger."

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"Ma'am?" he said. "Isn't Anita coming in here pretty soon? I was just waiting for her."

"I'm sorry," she said, quickly. "I came to say that it will be better for you not to wait. Anita is chatting with her cousin."

Albert got heavily to his feet. "What you mean? She isn't going to spend the whole afternoon with Swink, is she?"

"I beg your pardon."

"That Henry Wilkins! She isn't crazy enough about him to spend the whole——"

"She hasn't any such ideas in her head, Mr. Alberger. Both she and her cousin are too young to think of such things yet. I'm afraid I must make it clear," Mrs. Wilkins continued, with an accession of primness. "What I am saying concerns nobody except yourself."

Albert coughed uncomfortably; he was becoming conscious of a destiny overhanging and about to fall upon him ponderously. He felt a strong dislike for this ominous lady. "Well, does something seem to be the matter?" he asked, not knowing what else to say.

"Very much so," she returned. "I think I must be quite frank with you. You see, when Anita

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met you she had no idea who you were, Mr. Alberger."

"Who I was?" he echoed, utterly puzzled.

"She asked you to call, without knowing who you were," Mrs. Wilkins went on, in her quick, quiet way. "She tells me you came several times before you mentioned definitely who you were. When you did mention it she ought to have told her father and me at once; but Anita is very tender-hearted, and she put off telling us, because she knew that we could take no possible course except to end the acquaintance instantly. I know how sensitive she is to the giving of pain, but I think she was very wrong not to tell us who you were as soon as she found out. She says herself that keeping such a thing secret from us has weighed more and more on her conscience until to-day, when she felt that she couldn't bear it any longer. She has just come to me in my room and told me who you were, Mr. Alberger."

"Who I *am?*" said Albert. He was dazed; most of what she said amazed and staggered him; he could not discern her meaning. But "end the acquaintance instantly"—*that* stood out with a sinister intelligibility, and frightened him.

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"She felt she must put the matter entirely in my hands," Mrs. Wilkins informed him.

"Look here!" said Albert. "You got me all mixed up. I don't know what you're talking about. Did *she* get you to come in here to tell me she wants to sit in there and talk to Swink Wilkins, now he's got fired and come back to——"

Mrs. Wilkins interrupted him firmly. "I see I shall have to be even painfully frank, Mr. Alberger. You entirely misunderstand your own position. When I heard your name mentioned by Anita, I did not connect it with a place I have often—too often—heard of: the Alberger——" she paused, reluctant to use distasteful words, then compelled herself to go on—"the Alberger saloon!" she said.

"Well," said Albert, "I don't see what's the matter. Albergers' isn't a saloon, though; not as you name saloons. Our place is a wine-house and bowling-alleys and garden, and it's got the best business in the city. I guess you don't hardly mean Anita thinks she's too good for Albergers'?"

Mrs. Wilkins looked suddenly faint. For a moment she was unable to reply; then she found a voice much louder than she had been using. "Your father is a German saloonkeeper!" she cried.

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"All right," said Albert, fiercely. "What comes next?"

"I think you should understand without my saying any more, Mr. Alberger."

"Understand what?"

Mrs. Wilkins looked him full in the eye. "Anita begs me to request you," she said, "that as she was under a misapprehension about you in asking you to call here, you will be good enough not to mention to anybody that you have ever been in this house."

This was, in truth, slightly over-interpreting Anita, but the young man seemed to call for extraordinary clearness of diction; and aside from something which Mrs. Wilkins thought of as "social strata," she had a profound horror of all traffickers in liquor.

"If my husband were here this afternoon," she said, "he would probably insist on your giving your word to grant Anita's request. He would ask you please not to speak to her upon the street—and not to mention her. I hope it will be unnecessary for him ever to have to approach you upon the subject."

She would have said a little more, but Albert's eyes, fixed upon her own, were becoming visibly bloodshot and unbearable. He was slow, but at

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last he understood her meaning to the full, and he understood Anita's.

Mrs. Wilkins moved backward nervously. "I think your hat——" she began, but decided not to make the suggestion more definite.

There was no need. Albert picked up his hat and stick from the table, where they lay by the bowl of apples; he put his hat on his head, and stamped vehemently out of the house. At the gate he turned.

There was the flicker of a curtain at a window downstairs; and this movement, though inconsiderable and brief, disclosed the fact that Henry Wilkins, Fifth, and Anita, over Henry's shoulder, were watching the passionate departure. They saw that he saw them, and, with a little confusion, decided to become invisible; upon which Albert, discovering that he held the remains of an apple embedded in a clinched palm of chamois, hurled this missive at the window, and departed, swiftly.

He reached the stable behind Albergers' Garden in time to unloose his emotions privately, or at least before a public consisting of no more than the mild horse and introspective cow there enclosed with him. He broke his stick into short pieces; he hurled the yellow gloves into the mire of the stalls, and

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trampled them down there. He used many words, both whole and broken, and uttered sounds that were not words at all. At last his reddened eyes lifted to a rafter, then slowly descended to the cow's halter of rope.

The combination of materials was gloomily suggestive; but Albert was young, and after a while he went up to the loft, and lay in the hay, brooding, until supper-time.

His father and Albert the First were already seated when young Albert came to the table. They let him begin his meal; then the ancient man nodded sagely to his son, who nodded back, and said:

"Brudie, I got to talk to you."

"Dot's right," said the ancient. "Gif it to him, hot, too!"

But before the son could obey, rebellion flamed from the grandson. He set down his coffee-cup, and banged the table with his fist alarmingly. "You better not!" he cried. "I won't stand not one word! I don't have to take it from anybody. I want to get out o' this place."

His two elders stared, incredulous; they looked at each other blankly, then more blankly at young Albert. Finally the grandfather seemed to have

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solved the riddle. He began to nod his fine old head; he nodded and nodded.

"Yes, sir," he said. "Didn't I knew it? Didn't I tolt you? You put it off too long, and let him keep goin' wit' Maple Streeters, till it's happened to him. Dose peoble, you know what dey are?"

"*I'll* tell you what they are!" young Albert shouted. "They're *Americans!*"

"*No*, sir!" the old man answered, straining his thin voice with the emphasis he demanded of it. "It's because you've gone crazy you say so: nobody can't make Maple Streeters Americans. Maple Streeters iss monkey-shines, and monkey-shines ain't Americans. I'm a Forty-Eighter and I'm a Sixty-Two-er! I been an American sixty-eight years; dot's long enough to know who besides me iss Americans, ain't it? You been goin' by Maple Street till you're crazy; you're spoilt; you're turned into a noodle! It's happened."

"It's a falsehood!" bellowed young Albert.

"Why is it?" his father asked angrily. "Didn't you just say you want to leave Albergers'?"

"I didn't! I want to leave this blame *town!*"

"Where you want to go, Brudie?" his father inquired, in complete astonishment.

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Albert sat sullen for a moment; then with lowered eyes he said: "I'd like to go to Germany."

"For a visit?" asked Albert, Junior. "You want to go and study something maybe?"

"No!" the boy returned fiercely. "I want to go live there!"

The Forty-Eighter hammered the table with knife and spoon; he burst into uproarious laughter which ran into falsetto and choked him. "You Brudie!" he said at last. "You go and lif in Chermany—see how you like it. Why, you can't speak good Cherman!"

"I'd learn it then."

"You better not!" cried the old man. "Pretty quick you'd say someding if it's understood you git in jail!"

"Why would I?"

"You couldn't *help* it! You got always used to speak what you want to, ain't you? Here, if you want to cuss somebody, you cuss him. In Chermany, if you want to cuss der Kaiser, you'd cuss him. In Chermany you expect a man can open his mout' to speak what he feels like? What am I a Forty-Eighter *for*, you Brudie?"

"I don't know," the youth said sullenly. "I

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wish you'd stayed there and been a reg'lar German!"

Old Alberger laughed again. "In America you stand up for Chermany; in Chermany you'd stand up for America——"

"You think I would?" Albert interrupted hotly. "It's why I'd like to go and live in Germany—because I hate them damned Americans!"

Again the elder two sat amazed. "You hate *who*, Brudie?" the grandfather asked, leaning toward him, across the table.

"I hate them damned Americans," Albert repeated; and his passion increased.

"You hate *me?* Ain't I an American?"

"You're not!" shouted Albert; and he struck the table again with his fist. "Maple Streeters, *they're* Americans! You're a German! You're a German saloonkeeper!"

"Yes, sir. Go on," said old Alberger, nodding. "What comes next?"

Albert threw down his napkin and leaped to his feet. "*I'm* a German!" he bellowed. "And I wish to God you'd had sense enough to stay in Germany where you belonged, and not come over and get me born here where I got to make myself sick

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lookin' at *Americans!* That dirty Maple Street ain't nothing *but* Americans!"

. . . He fled, noises of a vehement character marking his path through the farther chambers of the apartment. "Well, sir," said the Forty-Eighter, "he's gone crazy, but I guess we don't got to worry so much. Anyway, he ain't no Maple Streeter!"

And a little later, observing how young Albert rather morosely but efficiently managed the bowling-alleys in the somewhat Gothic hall, Albert the First addressed Albert, Junior, again upon the subject. "I guess he don't start for Chermany to-night, not chust yet a while! I expect—well, me and you, we ought——"

He lowered his voice to a whisper as a group of customers jovially approached; and Albert, Junior, was uncertain of his father's words, but he understood the old man's meaning, which was that both of them ought to be very kind to Brudie for a while. The final phrase of the Forty-Eighter was more distinct, however.

"Because Brudie, he's in a hell of a pickle!" his son understood him to say.

THE END

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